



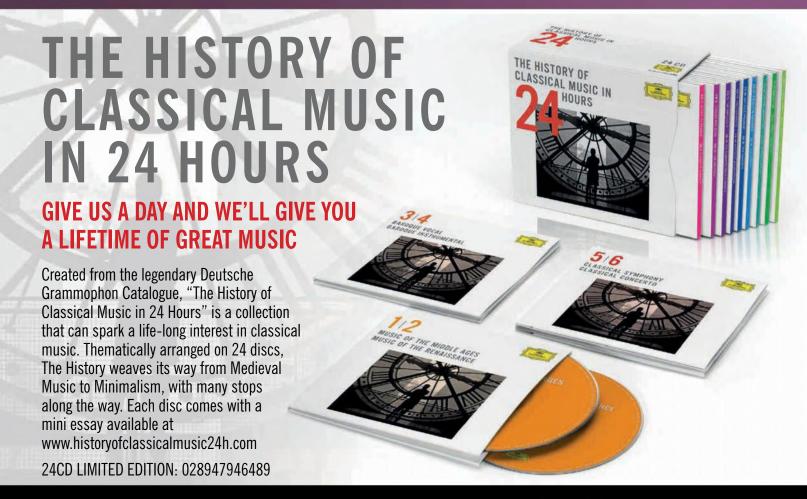


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GRAMOPHONE SOUNDS OF AMERICA

A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada

Debussy · Gao Ping

'Distant Voices'

Debussy Estampes - Jardins sous la pluie; Pagodes. Images. Rêverie. Suite bergamasque -Claire de lune **Gao Ping** Blue Flower. Concealed Kisses No 1. Evenings in Suburban Moscow. Katyusha: Homage to Shostakovich. Love Song of Kangdin. Nostalgia

Frederic Chiu pf

Yamaha Entertainment (F) YEGO11 (67' • DDD)



Frederic Chiu's new disc and accompanying DVD couldn't be more aptly titled. 'Distant

Voices' is both one of the pieces by Gao Ping that the pianist performs and a metaphor for connections between the living Chinese composer and a great Frenchman. Gao Ping drew inspiration from Debussy, whose style had been transformed a century earlier after hearing Javanese gamelan music. The programme alternates between the two composers' works, some of which emanate from similar, shimmering sound worlds. Selections from Debussy's *Images* and *Estampes* lead to Gao Ping's scores of analogous luminosity.

But Chiu also revels in contrasts in the Chinese composer's works. *Blue Flower* is an explosion of rhythmic twists and thematic turns, shaped with fierce brilliance. Three pieces for vocalising pianist allow him to engage in all sorts of whistling, sighing and screaming as he brings virtuoso zest to the keyboard challenges. The two Soviet love songs are wild and winning, especially *Katyusha*: *Homage to Shostakovich*, in which the composer's famous tweaking of 'Tea for Two' is incorporated to delightful effect.

Chiu draws a spectrum of colours from the Yamaha concert grand in the Debussy selections. He goes beyond the gossamer approach many pianists embrace, savouring subtle hues and delicate inner lines even as he gives full voice to Debussy's rapturous sonorities. The DVD contains all of the music on the CD, as well as interviews with Chiu about the genesis of the recording. Seeing him vocalise while playing is one

GRAMOPHONE talks to ...

Frederic Chiu

The pianist on recording works by Debussy and Gao Ping on a revolutionary new instrument

Why Debussy and Gao Ping together?

I was fascinated with the circular influences between French and Chinese music -Debussy was influenced by Asian folk music; Gao Ping was himself influenced by Debussy, and treated Chinese folksongs in a Debussian style in *Distant Voices*.

Gao Ping asks for more than playing.

One of his innovations is the idea of the Vocalising Pianist. He listened to Glenn Gould, among others, and felt that the humming and singing were an integral part of the listening experience. So he formalised that in works where the pianist is asked to hum, sing, whistle, breathe loudly, groan, buzz, scream, sigh and slap the piano, among other things!

You made the recording on a Disklavier.

The latest version of Disklavier has crossed a threshold of fidelity that suddenly makes possible what was previously unthinkable.



For context, Disklavier is a modern playerpiano technology that reproduces the actions of the keys and pedals, causing the piano to play itself in an acoustic way. For a much lower production cost, we were able to produce a recording on three platforms: audio CD, video DVD and DisklavierTV.

Are follow-up projects planned?

'Distant Voices' is a pilot project - this is Yamaha Entertainment Group's first classical recording. I'm beating a path that I and other musicians will be following, working out the protocol kinks and truly streamlining the process to set an industry standard. I'm glad to have a head-start on this path because I think there will be a stampede soon!

of the charming moments in a thoroughly compelling documentary. **Donald Rosenberg**

Miller (DJ Spooky)

Rebirth of a Nation

DJ Spooky narr Kronos Quartet
Cantaloupe (Ē) (CD + ♥♥) CA21110 (79' • DDD)
Bonus DVD includes live performance

of 'Rebirth of a Nation'



DW Griffith's 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation* is among the most incendiary works

in cinematic history for its treatment of racial issues in mid-19th-century America.

Paul D Miller, aka DJ Spooky, That Subliminal Kid, adds to the controversy with dual contemporary takes on the movie – from both aural and visual points of view.

There are, indeed, two ways to experience Miller's score in this package: listen to the CD or watch the film remix on DVD. The latter cuts the Griffith original by two-thirds, preserving what might be perceived as the most dramatic and provocative moments, and adds graphics and unusual camera effects that appear intended to serve as ironic commentary on the narrative. The original movie is disturbing in the extreme; the remix fans the flames, and even uses the silent-movie titles with Miller's name substituted for Griffith's.



Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra Jaap van Zweden · Matthias Goerne Michelle DeYoung · Kim Begley Oleksandr Pushniak · Anna Samuil Charles Reid

With Matthias Goerne as Wotan and Michelle DeYoung as Fricka.



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NAXOS





The Jack Quartet, who perform Lewis Nielson's Le journal du corps on Mode's new disc of the composer's works

And the music? On the CD, it comes across as a blend of minimalism, jazz, blues and other genres that leans towards the repetitive and monotonous, with special effects thrown in to add dashes of sonic interest. The score accompanies the remix film version with surprisingly little impact, more often than not sounding like a stranger that has wandered in from another galaxy.

The string doodling on the soundtrack is in the authoritative and patient hands of the Kronos Quartet, who are always up for artistic adventure. But the musical payoff here is much too limited, for ears and eyes alike, to allow these players to show how daring they can be.

Donald Rosenberg

L Nielson

Le journal du corps^a. Tocsin^b. Axis (Sandman)^c

'Emily DuFour vc bcSteven Schick perc

ac Jack Quartet; bRed Fish Blue Fish;

'Nicholas DeMaison cond

Mode ® MODE283 (60) • DDD)



In three sonically obliterating works written since 2005, Lewis Nielson stretches conventional instruments beyond their comfort levels so they can submit more easily to his unconventional expressive purposes and extreme technical devices. Two of the pieces have a strong political message in their DNA, but have such structural integrity that they stand on their own.

In *Le journal du corps*, Nielson makes the commissioning Jack Quartet be the messenger for a cry of pain. Using texts by the Martinique leader Aimé Césaire focused on 'the destructive power of corporate oligarchy in an increasingly rapacious capitalist environment', Nielson lays down a musical blueprint asking for sounds most string quartets never knew existed, finding communication in screeching, grinding and harsh harmonics, diverting them down long organic channels, resetting them at times by moments of pure, consoling silence.

Nielson wrote the title-track, *Axis* (*Sandman*), for Steven Schick, his 'lifelong collaborator' and founder of the Red Fish Blue Fish percussion ensemble. In addition to being a brilliant 15-minute rolling narrative for percussionist and two-cello string quintet which pleasantly never quite gets anywhere in particular, *Axis* gives all of the instruments, both struck and bowed, lots of demanding solo opportunities.

The title of Nielson's *Tocsin* positions the work as a universal call to alarm, to action; Red Fish Blue Fish play its dialogues, and capture moods and emotions that range from quick-moving exchanges to rhythmic *fortissimo* unisons all based on ingeniously self-referencing vocabulary. The only thing missing is seeing the remarkable, athletic precision *Tocsin* demands live in concert. Laurence Vittes

Prokofiev · Rachmaninov · Tchaikovsky

Prokofiev Violin Sonatas - No 1, Op 80; No 2, Op 94a Rachmaninov Marguerite (transcr Kreisler) Tchaikovsky Mélodie, Op 42 No 3 The Weiss Duo

Crystal Records © CD882 (58' • DDD)

Recorded live at Kimball Hall, Chicago, 1968



Due to an unexpected stroke of good luck, Crystal Records has issued

for the first time a Russian programme played by violinist Sidney Weiss and his wife Jeanne, taken from a 1968 live concert in Kimball Hall, Chicago, taped by legendary WFMT recording engineer Norman Pellegrini. At the time the

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Vladimir Horowitz RETURN TO CHICAGO

Deutsche Grammophon is privileged to release for the very first time one of pianist Vladimir Horowitz's late concerts, from Chicago in 1986. Recorded before a live audience, the program includes works by Scarlatti, Mozart, Scrabin, Schumann, Liszt, Chopin and Moszkowski. As a bonus, two interviews are also included, 028947946496

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-

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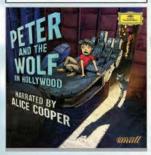
Morton Feldman / Erik Satie / John Cage ROTHKO CHAPEL

This album addresses a network of musical relationships and inspirations and is expertly performed by Grammy*-winning violist Kim Kashkashian, Sarah Rothenberg (celeste), Steven Schick (percussion) and The Houston Chamber Choir, 028948117963



Julia Lezhneva HANDEL

Julia Lezhneva's pure soprano voice is ideally suited to the Italian arias composed by a young Handel. This album includes the best of Handel's works from his years in Florence and Rome, including selections from Rodrigo, Agrippina and many more. Lezhneva is joined by It Giardino Armonico under the direction of Giovanni Antonini, 028947867661



Peter at the Wolf in Hollywood NARRATED BY ALICE COOPER

This album features a brand new recording of Prokofiev's classic, Peter and the Wolf, which is coupled with a specially-written prequel for the first time. Peter finds himself in Hollywood starting an amazing adventure in the prequel which is scored with excerpts of great symphonic works. Rock icon Alice Cooper narrates both stories.

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ANDREW CLEMENTS, THE GUARDIAN







Sidney and Jeanne Weiss: Crystal Record's has released their 1968 Chicago recital, featuring sonatas by Prokofiev

Chicago-born and raised Weiss, after 10 years of playing for George Szell in Cleveland and Zubin Mehta in Los Angeles, was co-concertmaster at the Chicago Symphony.

Putting to full use the commanding, soaring precision and full-blooded but selfless style that made him one of the country's most valued concertmasters – he would later return to Los Angeles to lead the Philharmonic at the invitation of Carlo Maria Giulini before departing when Esa-Pekka Salonen ushered in a new regime in 1995 – Weiss demonstrated a deep identification with and sensitivity to Prokofiev's quicksilver moods and unique colours, partnered in every sense and measure by his wife's unflappable, elegant virtuosity.

This recording, which Weiss recently rediscovered in his library and made available to his friend Peter Christ's label, concludes with inimitable performances of two miniatures: Kreisler's arrangement of Rachmaninov's song 'Marguerite', which Weiss in his booklet-note calls 'a small masterpiece', and the 'Mélodie' from Tchaikovsky's familiar Souvenir d'un lieu cher. Adding to the musical pleasure are the golden, earthy tones of Weiss's 1965 violin, one of the six he made through the years and used on all his solo recordings.

Laurence Vittes

'Crimson & Lace'

Bilotta The Song of the Hermit Thrush^a DeVasto Winter Seven^b Diehl Anyone^c. Wedding Day^c

^bSarita Cannon sop ^cBradford Gleim, ^aScott

Uddenberg bars ^aJennie Brown fl ^aBen Weber va

^aSoyoung Kee, ^cChiharu Naruse pfs ^aElmhurst

College Chamber Singers; ^bDivisa Ensemble;

^aDavid DeVasto cond

Navona (F) NV6006 (42' • DDD • T)



Another in Navona Records' typically intense and varied compilations of new

music presents sympathetic, earnest performances of three under-the-radar American composers struggling to find consolation amid emotional uncertainty, hopelessness and pain. From John G Bilotta, who quotes Michael Tippett's 'The role of the artist is the creation of images of vigour for a decadent period' on his Society of American Composers homepage, comes an exquisite Song of the Hermit Thrush for soprano, flute, oboe, violin (as the thrush), viola and cello, using a section of Walt Whitman's poem 'When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd' that welcomes 'the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding Death'.

The 25-minute Winter Seven for baritone, choir, flute, viola and piano by David DeVasto - an assistant professor of music at Elmhurst College in suburban Chicago – on texts by Elmhurst colleague Lance Wilcox that give the CD its title, includes a moving reference to the terrible Civil War battle of Shiloh and a rat-filled one to London's Great Plague of 1665 among its reference points, while hope is represented by an inevitable crocus of spring. And if the first six notes of Paula Diehl's 'Anyone' are unintentionally the same as the beginning of Marian the librarian's piano lesson in *The Music Man*, her two songs do have a similarly authentic, highly appealing home-grown feel, not surprisingly for a composer whose self-devised system of composition is called Separation, using overlapping fourths as the working intervals, gradually separating them in phases until total separation is achieved.

Laurence Vittes

'Origins'

Koumatsu Japanese Folk Song Suite No 2
Stravinsky Three Pieces
D Visconti Ramshackle Songs
Volans String Quartet No 2, 'Hunting: Gathering'
Kontras Quartet
MSR Classics (F) MS1537 (67' • DDD)

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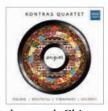
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The Kontras Quartet offer an enterprising programme of 20th-century repertoire on their debut disc



Bravo to the Kontras Quartet for showing such initiative. For their debut recording,

the superb Chicago-based ensemble have eschewed anything resembling the predictable and instead chosen new, recent or 20th-century music from each member's continent. The repertoire, like the group's name (Afrikaans for 'contrasts'), is highly varied in language and effect.

Kevin Volans's String Quartet No 2 paints a sonic portrait of South Africa, with primitive and folk materials rubbing shoulders with contemporary techniques. The score's subtitle, *Hunting: Gathering*, suggests the mysterious and jubilant atmospheres Volans evokes in three mesmerising movements.

Another series of vistas is set forth in Hajime Koumatsu's *Japanese Folk Song Suite* No 2, which calls on the players to engage in delicate, whimsical and sorrowful materials. The third movement is played entirely *pizzicato* to simulate a shamisen. The finale, with asymmetrical rhythms, comprises a theme and brief variations.

Stravinsky's Three Pieces for string quartet are also short, packing a panoply of pungent, colourful and mournful ideas into small spaces. Similarly compact are Dan Visconti's Ramshackle Songs, 11 movements summoning, in vibrantly modern terms, the nostalgic and energetic products of Tin Pan Alley. Alternately saucy and haunting, the songs require scrupulous shading and control. As in everything on their inaugural disc, the Kontras players are alert to the minutest facets in the Visconti songs. How they apply such care and personality to core repertoire will be fascinating to hear some day, though more explorations of repertoire beyond the standard would be very welcome.

'Siegfried Idyll'

Brahms Capriccios, Op 76 - No 2; No 5. Intermezzos: Op 117 No 1; Op 118 - No 1; No 2; No 6; Op 119 No 3 Liszt Am Grabe Richard Wagners, S202. Funérailles, S173 No 7. Nuages gris, S199 Wagner Siegfried Idyll (arr J Rubinstein)

David Deveau pf Steinway & Sons (F) STNS30051 (65' • DDD)



The title of David Deveau's new disc is 'Siegfried Idyll', which the pianist

plays in the transcription by Josef Rubinstein. But the monicker gives no hint of the fascinating connections with the other composers on the recording, both of whom lived in an artistic universe near or extremely close to Wagner.

Deveau opens and closes with music of Liszt abounding in innovation (*Nuages gris*) or morbid beauty ('Funérailles', *Am Grabe Richard Wagners*), and follows *Siegfried Idyll* with two capriccios and five intermezzos by Brahms. While these works are distinctive examples of their creators' art, they share a generosity of expression and harmonic richness that bind them, as if they were friends in conversation.

The Rubinstein version of Siegfried Idyll is a curiosity and a treat. It doesn't try to compete with the colours of Wagner's original scoring but rather provides a new window on to the music's intimacy and tenderness. Deveau plays the piece with subtle patience, inflecting and shaping lines to luminous effect. Then again, the pianist is at home in all of this repertoire. 'Funérailles' emerges in a cohesive unfolding of ominous and violent grandeur. The other Liszt pieces, while short, also receive keenly felt performances.

Attention to detail pervades the accounts of the Brahms miniatures, whose coquettish, robust and poetic sound worlds entrance the ear at every moment. Deveau focuses on tonal beauty and nuance, though never at the expense of dramatic urgency. In the pianist's sensitive hands, those imposing in-laws, Liszt and Wagner, are powerless to upstage Brahms. **Donald Rosenberg**

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very issue, six pages on from this space, we direct readers towards our website, with the encouragement that 'The magazine is just the beginning...' The magazine is indeed the beginning, from which most else that we do springs, as it's here that we first publish our reviews, which then form our unrivalled archive and reviews database. But in a more philosophical way, recorded music - which is the bedrock of the magazine you now hold in your hands – is the starting point for the wider exploration of music that the website offers. It's something that defines us and makes us distinct.

One area we've given online space to is in-depth discussions about some of classical music's more contentious areas. We do this knowing that our online readers will - and they gratifyingly do - join in, agreeing, disagreeing, challenging our arguments, sharing their views, and enhancing the overall debate.

This month has seen two such features. The first, by Charlotte Gardner, was a thorough exploration of the impact that streaming - via sites such as Qobuz, Apple Music and Spotify - is having on classical recording. Many of the topic's key points have been regularly rehearsed in this column, and this isn't the time to do so again (apart from the fact that you'd be much better off reading Charlotte's fascinating piece!). But based as it is both on interviews with some of the key industry figures representing some of today's leading labels and on industry analysis, we hope Charlotte's article contributes something significant to wider awareness of this very important topic.



We've also just published a piece by Philip Clark about the concert-going experience, and about the relationship between classical music and our age more generally. His conclusions may surprise many; but what I'd most like this piece to do is get people talking. We can't take classical music's place in the world for granted, but equally we shouldn't just take all the criticism aimed at it on the chin, without questioning the assumptions behind what is being said, and why. That's what Philip does, and I'd love to know what you think.

This month saw the death of Duncan Druce, composer, performer, academic and for many years *Gramophone* critic – and a figure who rendered easy categorisation rather pointless. Here was a man who was a founder-member of Harrison Birtwistle's contemporary music ensemble Pierrot Players, who played in Peter Maxwell Davies's Fires of London and Christopher Hogwood's Academy of Ancient Music, who undertook a completion of Mozart's Requiem - given at the 1991 Proms by Roger Norrington and subsequently recorded by EMI - and who was informed by music from non-Western traditions he heard while travelling. His reviews were always perceptive, erudite, delivered in a generous spirit, and rich in their lightly worn but deep awareness of recordings both historic but crucially recent too. What are musicians and, indeed, what is music (whenever it is written) trying to communicate to us today? That's not a bad touchstone for all of us when listening to, and thinking about, classical music.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



Like many. LINDSAY KEMP has long had John Eliot Gardiner's popular 1985 recording of the

Bach B minor Mass in his collection, so he was pleased to find when interviewing the conductor about his new recording of it that while 30 years may have had a mellowing effect, Gardiner has lost none of his passion for the work.



JEREMY NICHOLAS relished the opportunity to write a Collection on Weber's

Konzertstück in this issue. 'Weber seems vastly underrated these days,' he says, 'so to spend extended time with the revolutionary work that first turned me on to his genius has meant hours of pure pleasure.'



'I met Gautier Capucon in Lille, where he'd come out of a rehearsal to talk to me about Shostakovich, He

seemed remarkably fresh, although he told me he was worried he might not know what to say. As soon as we got started, I knew there wouldn't be any problems,' says ARIANE TODES, author of this month's The Musician and The Score.

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CONTENTS

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

The 12 most highly recommended recordings of the month

FOR THE RECORD

The latest classical music news











8







28

50

62

74

88

94

96

124

128

Reviews

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Igor Levit tackles three towering sets of variations

ORCHESTRAL

Ibragimova in Bach concertos; Muti's CSO Berlioz; new Chopin from Argerich; Offenbach from Neeme Järvi; Gautier Capuçon's Shostakovich

CHAMBER

Weilerstein in Chopin and Rachmaninov; a period-instrument Schubert quartet; bon-bons from Yo-Yo Ma and Kathryn Stott

INSTRUMENTAL

Chopin from Yundi and Dong Hyek Lim; Hough in Janáček and Scriabin; four-hand Fleisher

VOCAL

Bliss's Morning Heroes; Anne Boleyn's Songbook from Alamire: Ex Cathedra's 'Brazilian Adventures'

REISSUES

Delving deep into the Horowitz archive; Marcel Dupré's legacy on Mercury Living Presence

OPERA

Naxos's new Rheingold; period-instrument Bellini; a trio of Rameau releases; Cavalli collections

REPLAY

A collection of historical Sibelius recordings; Kogan in concertos; Goossens's Tchaikovsky

BOOKS

David Gutman on a new biography of Alma Mahler; a new study of musical exoticism

GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION 102

Jeremy Nicholas chooses the finest recording of Weber's Konzertstück in F minor

NEW RELEASES

REVIEWS INDEX

Features

BACH'S B MINOR MASS

10

Thirty years after making his first recording of Bach's monumental Mass, Sir John Eliot Gardiner returns to the work for another take, this time on his own label, Soli Deo Gloria

IGOR LEVIT

16

The pianist talks to Hugo Shirley about his ambitious new album for Sony Classical and his uncompromising approach to recording

GIANANDREA NOSEDA

20

22

Geoffrey Norris meet the conductor as he continues his series championing lesser-known Italian composers for Chandos

AT HOME WITH THE HALLÉ

Martin Cullingford travels to Manchester to visit the Hallé's new rehearsal and recording studio as they tape Elgar's Sea Pictures

THE MUSICIAN & THE SCORE 48

Shostakovich's First Cello Concerto presents a daunting physical challenge for Gautier Capuçon, who talks to us about playing the piece

ICONS 60

Mike Ashman surveys the career and recordings of the American soprano Anna Moffo

CONTEMPORARY COMPOSERS

Andrew Mellor pays tribute to Aulis Sallinen, a masterful composer of opera and symphonies

CLASSICS RECONSIDERED

98

Mravinsky's 1960 account of Tchaikovsky's Pathétique comes under the spotlight

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE

100

English music of remembrance, by Geraint Lewis

PLAYLISTS

108

Featuring playlists from conductors Hannu Lintu and Laurence Equilbey, and pianist James Baillieu

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

111

The best classical music concerts worldwide

HIGH FIDELITY

113

Reviews of the Quad Vena amp and the Focal Sphear in-ear headphones

LETTERS & OBITUARIES

122

MY MUSIC 130

Choreographer Kim Brandstrup on how a passion for film led to a love for classical music



NEW RELEASES

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DELPHIAN



DCD34169

Mynstrelles with Straunge Sounds: the earliest consort music for viols

Clare Wilkinson, Rose Consort of Viols

A rapid transformation in musical tastes occurred in the years around 1500, with the widespread distribution of part-music in the new medium of print – it was in this context that the consort of viols emerged. For their third recording on Delphian, the Rose Consort use a set of instruments modelled on those depicted in a Bolognese altarpiece dating from 1497. Peerless early-music mezzo Clare Wilkinson joins the consort in a sophisticated interweaving of voices that casts revealing light on the earliest music for this innovative ensemble.

'Wilkinson delivers the sung numbers with deliciously understated refinement; the viols play with alluring sophistication'

- Sunday Times, August 2015



DCD34160

Loquebantur: Music from the Baldwin Partbooks The Marian Consort/Rory McCleery; Rose Consort of Viols

John Baldwin was a lay clerk at St George's Chapel, Windsor in 1575 and became a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal in 1598. The so-called 'Baldwin partbooks', held at Christ Church, Oxford, were his creation – a very personal collection, representing his individual tastes and interests from a wealth of English and Continental polyphony and consort music. As in their previous collaboration, an exploration of the similarly conceived partbooks of Robert Dow, the Marian Consort and Rose Consort of Viols have kept faith with Baldwin's own intentions, bringing to light some of the rarer gems preserved by this great advocate and music-lover and providing the listener with 'such sweete musicke: as dothe much delite yeelde'.

New in September 2015



DCD34156

Solitudes: Baltic Reflections Mr McFall's Chamber

No one knows quite when tango was established in Finland, but the style has a long history there - still little known to outsiders – and combines rhythmic interest and yearning melody with a distinctively Nordic melancholy. In this ingeniously curated programme, two Finnish tangos from the 1950s and a tango-based work by Finnish classical composer Aulis Sallinen are woven into a bold tapestry of music from the Eastern Baltic seaboard: music by Vasks, Pärt, Olli Mustonen, Zita Bružaitė, and the surprisingly proto-minimalist rocking accompaniment of Sibelius's Einsames Lied. Longing, sadness, and a heightened sense of nature infuse all of these works, while Robert McFall's sensitive arrangements of the tangos for a core McFall's line-up of five strings and piano culminate in a truly unique version of Sibelius's famous Finlandia Hymn.

'Full marks for originality of concept and for execution, which has all this ensemble's trademark style and communicative nous'

— Gramophone, Awards issue 2015

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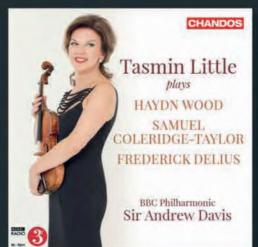


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CHANDOS November Releases



Disc of the Month Tasmin Little plays British Violin Concertos

BBC Philharmonic / Sir Andrew Davis

Following their acclaimed Elgar and Moeran concerto recordings (CHSA 5083 and CHAN 10796, respectively - the latter an Orchestral Choice in BBC Music), Tasmin Little and Sir Andrew Davis give further evidence of their special affinity for British music with an exciting new recording of works by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Haydn Wood, and Frederick Delius.

CHAN 10879

SUPER AUDIO CD IN SURROUND SOUND



Neeme lärvi conducts Offenbach

Orchestre de la Suisse Romande / Neeme Järvi

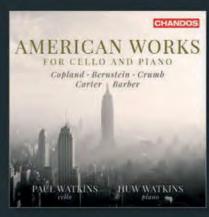
Neeme Järvi - one of the most recorded living conductors - and the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande explore Offenbach's effervescent music in this third album of their survey of French orchestral works of the 19th century. Those vividly tuneful overtures were all recorded in Geneva's historic Victoria Hall.



Casella Orchestral Works, Vol. 4

BBC Philharmonic Gianandrea Noseda

Conductor of the Year at the 2015 Musical America Awards, Gianandrea Noseda conducts the BBC Philharmonic in a fourth captivating volume of orchestral works by Alfredo Casella, part of our ongoing Musica Italiana series which now numbers more than fifteen recordings.



American Works for Cello and Piano

Paul Watkins/Huw Watkins

Having explored many twentiethcentury British works for cello and piano, the Watkins brothers turn their attention to the American contribution to this repertoire. The music spans a fascinating period of some four decades of intensive compositional activity in the United States.



Rachmaninoff Piano Duets

Louis Lortie/Hélène Mercier

More than twenty years after their last recording of piano duets on Chandos, Louis Lortie and Hélène Mercier - a 'magisterial duo' offering 'fascinating playing' (Gramophone) return to perform poetic and powerful duets by Rachmaninoff: the two suites and the Symphonic

CHAN 10882

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GRAMOPHONE Editor's choice



Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's





BACH. RZEWSKI. **BEETHOVEN**

Piano Variations Igor Levit pf Sony Classical ® 3 88875 06096-2

► DAVID FANNING'S **REVIEW IS ON**

PAGE 24

Igor Levit is clearly one of his generation's most remarkable pianists. In these three works – all sets of variations – he reveals a virtuosity and reflective maturity that compel attention.

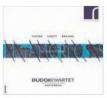


CASELLA

'Orchestral Works, Vol 4' Gillian Keith sop BBC Philharmonic / Gianandrea Noseda Chandos © CHAN10880

A further instalment in Noseda's committed advocacy of Casella, one which is surely achieving his aim of making people hear this music with open ears and minds.

▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 32



'MÉTAMORPHOSES'

Works by Brahms, Haydn and Ligeti **Dudok Quartet** Resonus © RES10150 Into an era rich

in really fine young quartets comes an impressive debut from Amsterdam-based Dudok Quartet, with a programme as thoughtfully conceived as it is played.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 57



'LE CONCERT **ROYAL DE LA NUIT'**

Ensemble Correspondances / Sébastien Daucé Harmonia Mundi

F 2 HMC95 2223/4

A captivating programme, one rooted in historical research and context, but most importantly in performances full of rhythm, elegance and life.

REVIEW ON PAGE 82



RAVEL

Piano Concertos Yuja Wang pf **Zurich Tonhalle** Orchestra / **Lionel Bringuier**

DG ® 479 4954GH

A young virtuoso star, and one who keeps more than justifying her status, here with an engagingly played disc of French music.

▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 40



CHOPIN

Preludes, Op 28, etc Dong Hyek Lim pf Warner Classics © 2564 60688-8 Young South

Korean pianist Dong Hyek Lim here offers a considered and engagingly played Chopin recital, with a really beautiful set of the Preludes at its heart.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 63



'POETRY IN MUSIC' The Sixteen / **Harry Christophers**

Coro © COR16134 The Sixteen so consistently

perform at the highest level that it's easy to take them for granted; this exploration of English settings of poetry is very beautiful indeed.

▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 85



STRAVINSKY

The Rite of Spring MusicAeterna / **Teodor Currentzis** Sony Classical ® 88875 06141-2

A really thrilling, driven and brilliantly played Rite of Spring. It's all you get for your money – but that doesn't of course diminish its impact one bit.

▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 43



IVAN MORAVEC

'Twelfth Night Recital' Ivan Moravec pf Supraphon © 2 SU4190-2 Playing of warmth

and personality from a recital given 28 years ago and due to be released for Moravec's 85th birthday. Following his recent death, it now stands as a wonderful tribute.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 70



MOZART

II re pastore Sols; The Orchestra of Classical Opera / Ian Page

Signum M 2 SIGCD433

A superb set of soloists head up a quite delightful performance of Mozart's early opera, under the inspired baton of Ian Page.

▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 91



DVD/BLU-RAY

'SATIESFICTIONS'

'Promenades with Erik Satie' A film by Anne-Kathrin Peitz and

Youlian Tabakov

Accentus 🖲 🙅 ACC20312

A fascinating portrait, every bit as quirky and surprising as its composer subject.

► REVIEW ON PAGE 69



REISSUE/ARCHIVE

MARTLAND

Various works The Steve Martland Band / Steve Martland: The Smith Quartet

A memorial to this modern maverick, who died in 2013 aged 58. ▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 38



Listen to many of the Editor's Choice recordings online at

qobuz.com

FOR THE RECORD



Antonio Pappano (left) celebrates his Aida release with Patrick Lemanski, Head of Classics, Warner Music UK

Sir Antonio Pappano renews recording contract with Warner Classics

ntonio Pappano and Warner Classics are to continue their long-standing recording relationship. Music Director of the Royal Opera and of the Orchestra of the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, Pappano began working for the label - then EMI Classics - 20 years ago. Gramophone Awards to have emerged from the partnership include recordings of Rossini's Stabat mater, Puccini's Madama Butterfly and La rondine, Rachmaninov piano concertos with Leif Ove Andsnes, Massenet's Manon and Verdi's Don Carlo.

Though described as exclusive, the partnership, in common with those of most major artists, also allows scope for projects to appear on other labels. Future projects between Pappano and Warner Classics include a new disc of songs with tenor Ian Bostridge to mark Shakespeare's 400th-anniversary year celebrations.

'I am very lucky to have Alain Lanceron [President of Warner Classics and Erato] and his team on my side,' said Pappano about the agreement. 'This past season they showed tremendous courage and vision putting together the *Aida* project, a risk if there ever was one. This signal was very important to me personally and to the classical recording business as a whole. Difficult but important projects can and must be realised.'



NYCGB announce new digital singles release plan

The National Youth Choirs of Great Britain plan to release a digital single on the first Friday of every month to reflect the new ways that listeners are now engaging with music online. NYCGB Director Ben Parry said: 'The old strategy of recording 70 minutes of music and releasing it all at once is difficult to achieve and justify. By releasing new digital singles every month on the most popular digital stores and streaming services, we believe that we are ensuring maximum audience for our music-making.' Releases include Stanford's The Blue Bird (on January 1) and Holst's Nunc dimittis (on June 3).

Sakari Oramo to remain at the BBC SO until 2020

Sakari Oramo has extended his contract as Chief Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra until 2020. Oramo's first concert in the post was the First Night of the Proms in 2013, and he and the BBC SO recently produced an outstanding recording of Grieg's Piano Concerto with pianist Javier Perianes, which was an Editor's Choice in the July 2015 issue. Oramo won this year's *Gramophone* Contemporary Award for his recording of Nørgård's Symphonies Nos 1 and 8 with the VPO.

Rare Mozart letter sells for \$217,000 at auction

A one-page signed note by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart from 1786 to his friend Nikolaus Joseph von Jacquin, asking him to return three musical scores (Piano Quartet No 1, K478, Violin Sonata No 33, K481, and the Trio, K496) by way of messenger fetched \$217,000 in a US auction.

Yan Pascal Tortelier named Iceland SO Chief Conductor

he Iceland Symphony Orchestra has named Yan Pascal Tortelier its next Chief Conductor, beginning in September 2016. Tortelier first conducted the orchestra in 1998 but his more recent relationship with the ensemble dates from 2012, when he first conducted them in their new hall, Harpa, returning regularly since. The French conductor also has a relationship dating back 25 years with Chandos Records, and in a statement he confirmed that he will be recording with the Iceland Symphony for the British-based label.

'I am delighted and moved to be asked to become the Chief Conductor of the Iceland Symphony Orchestra,' said Tortelier, 'and am flattered and happy to discover that the musicians' committee voted unanimously to offer it to me. I enjoy a really good chemistry with the players and, of course, the new hall is a spectacular plus. I love making music with an orchestra that is so receptive.'

Tortelier's CV includes former positions with the Ulster Orchestra, the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra and the BBC Philharmonic.



Pretty Yende, who has signed for Sony Classical

Soprano Pretty Yende signs contract with Sony Classical

The South African soprano Pretty Yende has signed an exclusive recording agreement with Sony Classical. Her first album - a selection of opera arias that have defined her career thus far - is scheduled for release in autumn 2016.

Of the announcement, Yende said: 'Music has surely given me more than one incredible reason for every breath I take. It has opened so many doors that I never knew existed growing up in my little township of Thandukukhanya in Piet Retief. I am very excited and utterly thrilled to embark on this journey with Sony Classical.'

Augustin Hadelich wins Warner Music Prize worth \$100,000

The inaugural Warner Music Prize has been won by the young violinist Augustin Hadelich. The award, which has been established by Warner Music Group, is to be given annually to a musician under the age of 35 who demonstrates 'exceptional talent and promise'. Hadelich, who has already made several discs for Avie, receives \$100,000 and the opportunity to make a recording for Warner Classics.

Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin

The British conductor Robin Ticciati, currently Principal Conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Music Director of Glyndebourne Festival Opera, will become the next Music Director of the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin at the start of the 2017-18 season.

Ticciati will become only the eighth Music Director of the orchestra, which has previously gone under the names RIAS-Symphonie-Orchester and Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, and which was founded in 1947. Ticciati follows in the footsteps of Ferenc Fricsay, Lorin Maazel, Riccardo Chailly, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Kent Nagano, Ingo Metzmacher and Tugan Sokhiev.

Still relatively early in his career, Ticciati (b1983) has already produced many outstanding recordings, often with the SCO. Their disc of Berlioz's Les nuits d'été was Gramophone's Recording of the Month in June 2013, with critic Geoffrey Norris writing: 'Ticciati can coax a bleached, almost vibrato-less sound at moments of despair or introspection in "Au cimetière" and "Sur les lagunes"; the woodwind can take on an ominous darkness; but equally the sonority can blossom and burgeon in the final song, "L'île inconnue".

Other notable Ticciati recordings include Britten's Peter Grimes (from La Scala, on DVD and Blu-ray) and Schumann's Symphonies Nos 1-4 (with the SCO), of which David Threasher wrote: 'This is an extremely likeable and beautifully recorded traversal, worthy of standing alongside any of its recent competitors.'

Robin Ticciati to join the | GRAMOPHONE

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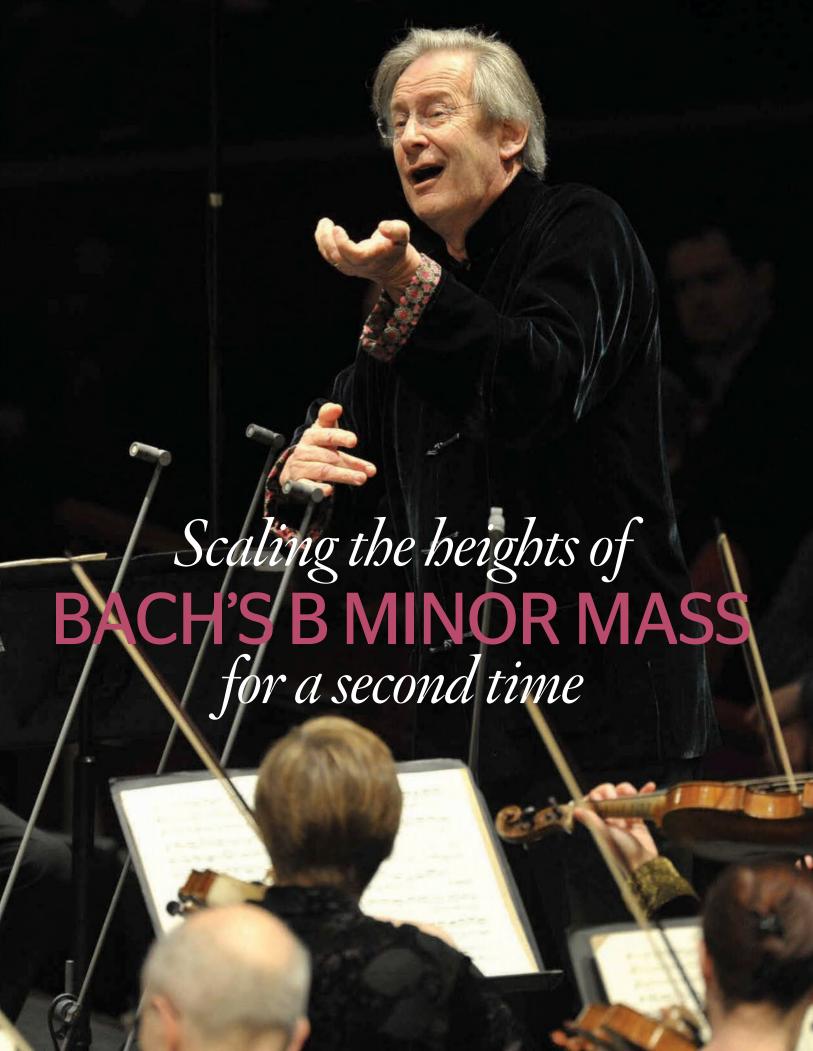


CLASSICAL MUSIC AND THE RISE OF STREAMING

The arrival of streaming services such as Spotify, YouTube and Apple Music has radically changed the way that many people are now listening to music. But there are many in the classical music recording industry who say that they cannot keep producing the same number of high-quality recordings on the income that they derive from streaming. And though most labels have made their recordings available on streaming services, there are some who continue to resist the technology. In a fascinating special feature for the Gramophone website, Charlotte Gardner speaks to industry experts and the directors of several independent classical labels to find out how classical music can adapt to and even thrive in - the brave new world of streaming.



Robin Ticciati will join the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin at the start of the 2017-18 season



Thirty years ago, Sir John Eliot Gardiner made his first recording of this towering summit of Western music. Now he's returning to it again with the same forces as before – but, as he tells Lindsay Kemp, at 72 he's even better equipped to bring out its dramatic narrative and ineffable beauty

climber you want to climb Everest. If you're a conductor you want to have another go at the B minor Mass.'

Sir John Eliot Gardiner has been having a busy summer, and it has taken a long time to set up this interview, but at last here we are in his south-west London home on the morning after the second of his two BBC Prom concerts (the first of Monteverdi's Orfeo and the second of Beethoven's Fifth and Berlioz's Symphonie fantastique). Now, looking relaxed after a good night's sleep and a massage, he is totally focused on the towering summit of Western music that is Bach's B minor Mass, which he has just recorded for the second

time, 30 years after the first. Not surprisingly, his

answers are long, detailed and informed.

t's there, like Everest, isn't it? If you're a

That first recording, made in 1985 in the studio for Deutsche Grammophon with his own Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque Soloists, is one that has acquired benchmark status over the years; certainly, if I am in a house where there is a recording of the Mass on the shelves, it will more often than not be Gardiner's. It means that the new one, for his 'own label' SDG and made from a private concert performance at LSO St Luke's in London earlier this year by the same forces, has some work to do to make a space for itself. 'We didn't get the whole picture the first time,' explains Gardiner. 'Not that you ever can. But now, with the experience of so many more joint outings of the work, quite apart from our far greater familiarity with Bach's cantata output, it felt good to make a second attempt at scaling the heights. I just feel in a better place to approach it now.'

Not that he rejects the earlier recording. There are no exhortations here to put it in the bin, as I once had from Viktoria Mullova in contemplation of her first recording of Bach's solo violin music. 'It was when DG were giving us the opportunity to record all the big iconic Bach choral works.

It was a heady time for the early music movement, so there was plenty of excitement within the group and I suppose there was inevitably a partly conscious element of positioning ourselves, making ourselves distinct from the old-fashioned, heavy-footed Lutheran tradition on the one hand, the overblown English choral society approach on the other, and at a time when the extreme minimalist slant was just coming into vogue. But, looking back on it, we were true to our values - emphasis always on textual clarity, underlying dance rhythms, the unfolding of the drama, and ensuring that the links that bind the public and private sections of the Mass are made audible. I was determined to "get it right" back then, with a very single-minded purpose to try and get everything correct as well as feeling lively. I don't feel the same pressure recording for our own label. It's a much more collegial process, and some of the things I was determined to do in the earlier recording I feel less strongly about now.'

Gardiner's earlier mention of his increased familiarity with the cantatas is a reference to the major celebration of the 250th anniversary of Bach's death that he and his musicians undertook in 2000, when they gave concert performances of all the composer's church cantatas on or near the liturgically appropriate days at historic venues throughout Europe. (The concerts, which were recorded, form the substance of the handsomely presented complete cantata cycle on SDG.) 'Knowing the cantatas alters your perspective of the bigger works because of the way they loom over its assembly and composition,' he says, and certainly I can remember how, when I heard Gardiner conduct the B minor Mass at the Proms in 2004, it was obvious that his view of the work had broadened, acquired more variety, and even softened since the cantata project. 'The large-scale works are easy to treat in isolation,' he continues, 'but if you can re-approach them from the aspect of Bach's weekly output of cantatas for the church and



Bach returns to Leipzig: a portrait by Elias Gottlob Haussman, which hung in Gardiner's home as he was growing up, is bequeathed to the Leipzig Bach Archive in June 2015

Bach's beliefs sometimes took a wobble,

and he found a way to reassure himself

through the act of music-making'

the extraordinary achievement they represent, you can see the Passions as climaxes of the annual cantata cycles, and the Mass as a compendium of all the different styles and approaches that he took across 30 or 40 years of music-making.'

he B minor Mass, it should be remembered, is not a wholly original work but a compilation of movements adapted in the final years of Bach's life from earlier compositions of his, mostly cantatas. The *Kyrie* and *Gloria* sections, for instance, were composed in 1733, while the *Credo*, *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei* which complete the setting were added to it in the late 1740s (for reasons that are not entirely

clear, but that perhaps include memorialising his own art as a church composer). Yet Gardiner clearly feels that greater understanding of the work comes not so much from comparing the music with its

models, but from the wider context of Bach's relationship with the church and his expression of it through his cantatas.

It is a subject that forms a major strand in his immensely stimulating book *Music in the Castle of Heaven*, written in the wake of the cantata cycle, in which he looks to these 200-or-so works, many of them still unfamiliar even to Bach lovers, for clues to the composer's deeper personality. 'One point I've changed over, both as a result of immersing myself in the cantatas so deeply and of reflecting on Bach as a composer and human being for the book, is his own tussles with belief and faith. So often the Lutherans have us believing he was a fully card-carrying Lutheran with no doubts, delivering *ex cathedra* statements, but I don't think he was anything like as simple as that.'

Gardiner cites the turbulent events of the first half of Bach's life – becoming an orphan at nine, having to find his own way as a professional musician, the deaths of his first wife and several of his children, as well as his continual struggles with authority – as formative elements in his approach to what music can express. 'These events shake him – they would shake anybody – but it shapes him in two different ways in musical terms. First he finds a way of writing music of unbelievable consolation and comfort to people who are grieving, starting with the *Actus tragicus* [Cantata No 106, written in 1707 for an unidentified funeral]. It's an absolute masterpiece, and the way he treats the ages of man and the consolation to be had suggests someone

who looks to music and religion to bolster a sense of safety and worth. Then there are other moments when the less savoury aspects of some proponents of Christian belief come in for target practice: radical clergy,

bigots, pharisaical people, anyone he feels is pious without backing it up with good Christian behaviour...Bach satirises like billy-o in some of the cantatas – he's almost personal in his attacks. So I think there's enough circumstantial evidence to suggest that his beliefs as a Christian sometimes took a wobble, and that he found a way to channel that energy of momentary disbelief into a force to encourage people in the same situation to hold faith, as well as to reassure himself and validate himself through the act of music-making.'

For Gardiner, the B minor Mass contains a glaring expression of passing doubt in the eerily hushed, chromatic transition passage that leads from the 'Confiteor' – significantly, one of the few newly composed sections in the piece – to the trumpet-led burst

12 GRAMOPHONE NOVEMBER 2015 gramophone.co.uk

of joy that is the 'Et exspecto resurrectionem'. 'Why else would he write that? The beginning of that movement is so strong – "I believe in one baptism for the remission of sins" – and you think it will be stern and confident from the beginning to the end, but all of a sudden the whole edifice crumbles, it becomes murky and goes into peculiar areas away from the home key. If you look at the manuscript you can see all the difficulty Bach had finding a way out of this monumental thicket of enharmonic movement, this jungle of dissonance, but eventually he does! It's like he's saying, "If you have a moment of doubt, I understand, and this is what it can lead to – a terrible moment of agnosticism. But just by tipping it back into D major we're into sunny uplands again, we're confident again, and yes I do know there'll be a resurrection!" Things like this make him more appealing to me as someone who's only religious really as a result of music!'

Music in the Castle of Heaven is full of firm, personal interpretations of Bach's church music such as these, many at a level of detail that will doubtless seem far-fetched to some people. But although Gardiner's closeness to Bach's music has evidently reached the point that master biographer Richard Holmes once identified as an essential process – 'not merely a "point of view" or an "interpretation", but a continuous living dialogue between [the biographer and his subject] as they move over the same historical ground' - he is clear that they are still only subjective extrapolations of the text, useful as a way of appreciating and interpreting the composer's decisions, but also a route to that elusive figure, Bach the man. 'Someone else could come to a totally different conclusion, absolutely, but there are certain things Bach flags up by his instrumentation, by the way he sets certain texts, that suggest to me a very strong imagery. One of my favourite cantatas is No 81, Tesus schläft, was soll ich hoffen?, all about these storms on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus is asleep in the bows of the boat, and there are beleaguered Christians clinging to the mast and thinking, "Why aren't you looking after me?" And then Jesus wakes up and says, "What's the trouble, why are you so frantic, you of little faith?" It seems to me it's not just a chastisement on behalf of the founder of the Christian faith, it's actually, you know, "You're a load of prats, I was here all the time!" It shows a certain kind of worldly wisdom and sense of fun that you don't tend to find in the Lutheran church, or in many Lutheran interpretations of Bach's cantatas. Bach and the church is a complex thing because Bach was really an asset to the Lutherans, but they were concerned he was stepping out of line, or perhaps the preacher had his nose out of joint because the cantata was doing a better job than his sermon was. And then as soon as he's dead there's a hagiolatry surrounding him, he's regarded as the Fifth Evangelist, the saviour of Lutheranism. Both miss the point. Bach can strengthen belief, but he's not the voice of the church. He was a deeply convinced and conscientious craftsman, but way beyond the capacity of contemporaries to understand.'

o back to the new recording of the Mass. On the face of it many things look similar to the old one, which in itself is remarkable when you consider how much has changed in the world of period performance since 1985. The forces are much the same: the Monteverdi Choir is still a mixed ensemble of 30-odd singers (including one, Nicolas Robertson, who sang in 1985), and the soloists are still mainly members of the choir. 'I don't believe in the B minor Madrigal,' he says in reference to the one-to-a-part approach introduced in the 1980s by Joshua Rifkin and Andrew Parrott, and adopted by quite a few others since. 'I don't think there's any evidence



for it, and I don't think there's any great merit in doing it that way. But I *am* a staunch believer in having the singers emerge from the *tutti* and then go back, so that there's a sense of concertino and ripieno, all honed from a general approach involving empathy and sensitivity to balance and texture within the group.'

Can Gardiner, then, reveal some of the ways his accumulated experience of the piece – and, at the age of 72, of life – has informed some of the details of his new reading? 'Well, one thing that's perhaps new is a sense of the fast,

virtuosic trumpety movements being more distinct from one another. They don't always need to be the same speed. I remember back in the early '80s a distinguished English Baroque trumpeter saying to me, "John Eliot, there's only one *allegro* tempo in Bach, and if you don't follow that you're traducing what Bach trumpets can do." I was upset about it back then, but now I just think it's a load of old cobblers!

A movement like the 'Et resurrexit' is like a fast polonaise, and nothing like as fast as the 'Cum Sancto Spiritu' or the 'Et exspecto'. And when you've got two movements in the same key that are

juxtaposed, like the 'Pleni sunt coeli' and the 'Osanna', it would be very easy to make them both the same, but also a shame because the 'Pleni sunt coeli' is full of hemiolas and has a wonderful variable beat of dance-pulse, whereas the 'Osanna' is an absolutely strict one-in-a-bar pulse all the way through and has a different type of charm. You lose that if you homogenise everything.'

Indeed, relationships between movements, and concerns for the bigger picture, seem to be the main thrust of Gardiner's rethinking of the piece. One example of this is the three

movements of the Kyrie. 'There are markings in the autograph manuscript saying "segue Christe", "segue Kyrie", explains Gardiner. 'Back in 1985 I thought, "Hell, this is an injunction from Bach not to do great big rallentandos but actually to keep the flow going from one movement into the other," so I was looking for exact proportions between 'Kyrie I', 'Christe' and 'Kyrie II'. I feel that's a bit of a straitjacket now. I think Bach simply meant us not to hang about, to get on with it. Those movements form a triptych, and you've got to feel it, but you don't have to drive them into an artificial, rigorous



Bach in Pisa: Gardiner conducts the B minor Mass at the 2013 Anima Mundi Festival

there is a kind of dramatic narrative within the Mass. That may seem odd because the dramatic structure of a liturgical Mass is not similar to a Passion, but if you look at the *Gloria* and *Credo* they do have a narrative. It may be slightly disguised, and it may to some extent stop when we get into the difficult theological beliefs that you're expected to accept like "I believe in one holy Catholic church and the remission of sins" etc, but when it's

dealing with the life of Christ it has a narrative that you find in the cycles of cantatas as well. The first half of the liturgical year, from Advent to Trinity, is all about the life of Christ up to the Ascension, and that, in

continuity.' Another example

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are totally different,' says

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Gardiner. 'And because there

the "Dona nobis", the rhetoric

and the shaping are different, and require a different Affekt.

are so many fewer words in

'Another thing that I

wanted to emphasise, but

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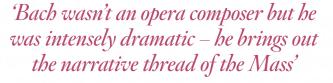
of Gardiner's change of

the canvas between the 'Gratias' and the 'Dona nobis

microcosm, is what you find in the *Credo* of the Mass. Bach, not being an opera composer but intensely dramatic, brings out that narrative thread. I find it very compelling, so yes, I suppose it's much more in evidence in the performance now.'

ardiner could probably talk for hours about Bach and the B minor Mass, just as when you read his book you suspect he could have produced twice as many pages as he actually settled on. Do his gathered observations run through his head when he conducts? 'No, I'm

just aware of how unbelievably perfect the music is, and how our job here, in this moment on earth, is to do justice in any way possible we can to Bach's vision. If you can get anywhere close to fulfilling what seem like his ideals through the way he's notated his music, you're on the right track. I feel inspired by Bach, and if that means one has religious feelings as a result of the extraordinarily spirituality of his music, all well and good, but to me it's not a means to an end, it's an end in itself. The end is the ineffable beauty of this music.' 6 Gardiner's Bach recording will be reviewed next issue





Take two: Gardiner and his forces record the Mass at LSO St Luke's back in March

Daniil Trifonov

THE MAGICS OF MUSIC

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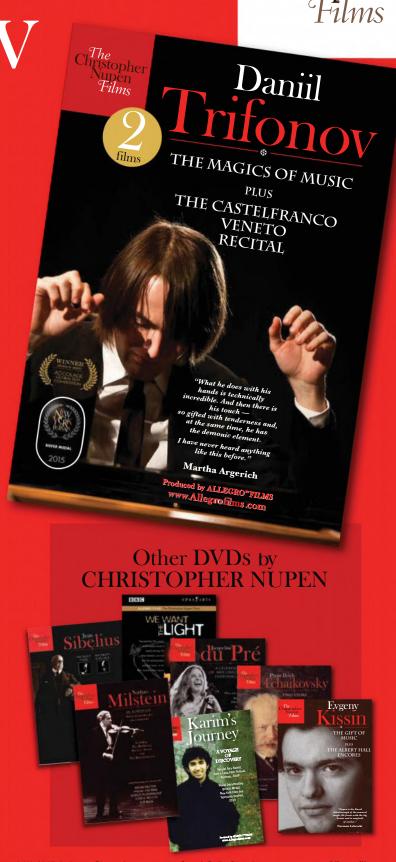
Jessica Duchen

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Classic FM Magazine











Variations are a journey: you become another person'

Tackling three sets of variations by Bach, Beethoven and Rzewski on a single recording is as great a challenge as any pianist can face, but it's just another example of Igor Levit's uncompromising determination, finds Hugo Shirley

hen Marc-André Hamelin released his recording of Frederic Rzewski's The People United Will Never Be Defeated! in 1999, Bryce Morrison wrote in these pages how he was impatient to see the Canadian pianist tackle Bach's Goldberg Variations and Beethoven's Diabelli Variations as well. That desire, articulated with a hint of wishful thinking, hasn't yet come to pass - at least not from Hamelin. Step up Igor Levit. His new three-disc album offers all three works in a project that straddles nearly two-and-a-half centuries of the piano literature, presenting music that offers some of the greatest intellectual, musical and technical challenges a pianist can face.

Levit is not one to shy away from challenges, however. In just a short time the pianist, who was born in 1987 in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia, but moved to Germany with his family at the age of eight, has established himself as one of the most fascinating instrumentalists around. His first two Sony discs, nominated for *Gramophone* Awards last year and this year, were of the late Beethoven sonatas and Bach Partitas. But the new set underlines that there's a great deal more to him than that Big-B focus.

When I meet Levit in Berlin he is quick to make clear that he sees these composers as a trinity of equal importance. He doesn't feel for one moment any sense of special pleading in the inclusion of Rzewski, the radical, consonant-heavy American composer (the name is pronounced 'jefski') whose *People United* was composed in 1975 as a modern complement to Beethoven's great set of 33 variations on Diabelli's simple little waltz. The fact that it has 36 variations, following the 33 and 30 'Veränderungen' (the German word implies something more transformational than the somewhat flat English equivalent) of the *Diabellis* and the *Goldbergs* respectively, offers

just one pleasing numerical development between these works, with Bach's set providing a foundational lexicon of variation techniques that both Beethoven and Rzewski build upon.

t's the morning after the final session. The works have been recorded in three four-day chunks over the course of several months in Berlin's Funkhaus Nalepastrasse – a remarkable purpose-built recording venue erected in the 1960s German Democratic Republic in an industrial area of what was the city's Köpenick district. (One of the designers, Gerhard Steinke, is still alive, Levit tells me excitedly: 'He's in his midelectronic music in the GDR. Frederic knows him and wrote a piece for him called Zoologische

Garten.') The previous evening it was the Goldbergs, in a final session that consisted of a run-through of the complete work in front of an invited audience of 'friends, colleagues,' he says, and – if the left-wing dimension of Rzewski's work isn't making me mishear – 'comrades'.

As we sit down to talk, I imagine Levit might well rather be elsewhere, and towards the end of the conversation he confides he's desperate to get back to Hanover for a couple of days in the gap between engagements. He's polite and completely engaged, however; he's an early riser in any case, he tells me. I immediately find out it doesn't take much to ignite the conversation: high energy and a combination of boundless enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity laced with a mischievous sense of the absurd all manifest themselves in speech that darts between subjects, effervescent on the surface but with frequent plunges into the philosophical depths.

His English is excellent but nevertheless struggles to keep up with his ideas, which are articulated with an honest candour that caused minor controversy in a recent interview, in which he was quoted as saying Chopin was 'dumb'. His thoughts regarding the composer come across clearly in our conversation, though. He loves the music dearly, but claims, 'I don't play Chopin, because I simply think I'm really bad at it.' This honesty is matched by generosity towards his peers: 'I hear a colleague like Rafał [Blechacz], and I think it's right. What he does is beyond incredible.'

As we discuss his present project, Levit's clear-sighted sense of purpose comes to the fore. His first three albums were planned as such right from his first talks with Sony Classical more than three years ago, this final triptych forming the missing panel in the larger triptych that all three releases come together to create. It's all closely 'curated' – that overused word suddenly seems the only one that fits – and there was never any doubt that it would include Rzewski's piece: 'I think this man is one of the most significant composers of our time; this is one of the most significant pieces and, among variations, I think it is one of the three greatest.'



The Funkhaus Nalepastrasse studio, ahead of the final session in Levit's project

Steinke, is still alive, Levit tells me excitedly: 'He's in his mid90s and used to run a studio for electronic music in the GDR.
Frederic knows him and wrote

*Rzewski is one of the most significant composers of our time; among variations, his piece is one of the three greatest'

iven how carefully his recording projects are planned, I wonder what's coming next. He laughs: it's barely 12 hours since finishing the last gargantuan project. There have been discussions, he tells me, and the three composers on the current album 'are the most important to me. But two are missing,' he adds: 'Schubert and Busoni.' Later in our conversation, as we delve deeper into the idea of variations – the musical form, he says, that has always been 'the closest to me' - he mentions 'one of my very favourite piano pieces, which I'm going to play at Wigmore Hall – Busoni's Fantasia contrappuntistica.' Other works he refers to include Max Reger's Variations and Fugue on a Theme of IS Bach, and in

interviews elsewhere he's mentioned Stockhausen. He doesn't seem to have enough 'favourite' labels to cover all these passions, but any subsequent projects with Sony, at least, look set to continue in a similarly uncompromising vein.

When I ask what it is about variation form that so appeals to him, the answer is less about the ingenuity of the composers or the opportunity it offers him as a pianist to revel in what he can do with the instrument. It's clear in performance that Levit takes great intellectual and sensual delight in those aspects, though, and he remembers a recital where he improvised a variation on Beethoven's Für Elise, applying a technique employed by Rzewski of playing just selected notes of the theme, disorientatingly repositioned up or down through octave displacement. 'There were 1500 people, it was a serious concert,' he tells me, 'and I went out on stage after playing Hammerklavier and said, "Tonight, ladies and gentlemen, for an encore I'd like to play a modern piece by a composer named..." and then I just made up a name. "It's called Fantasia, enjoy!" He played the complete piece in this way: 'Di...da...dee...dom,' he sings. 'And some loved it, but no one recognised what it was. No one! So after this, I said, "Ladies and Gentlemen, before I play my second encore, can you tell me what you just heard?" No one recognised it. Then I played Für Elise.'

It's a revealing episode but, as he continues, it becomes clear that variations mean something as much poetic and political to him as technical. 'With the idea of the variation, it all starts with smaller pieces of different kinds of characters and moods, and it's about how things change, how you basically express yourself. I always thought of variations as a kind of journey; and whoever you were here [at the start], here [at the end] you're another person. At least that what I would like to believe.'

f the three sets of variations on the new album, it's the Beethoven that he's been playing longest: his teacher at the Hanover Academy of Music pointed him in the direction of the score in 2004 and Levit performed it in his final examination there in 2010. It's not like

the '30 incredible little pieces' that, he says, make up the Goldbergs. The Diabellis are a 'a one-song piece' (this 28-yearold has no qualms about using the apparently 'unclassical' terminology of iTunes). You make this journey from the waltz, 50-plus minutes, and then all of a sudden, after the fugue, there are six bars of this incredible moment – it's kind of senza time, and the waltz finally turns around and becomes a minuet. And you think: wait a second, where are we? Suddenly you open your eyes and this whole craziness is over, and it's an incredible moment, an incredible experience you make.'

The journey in Rzewski's The People United Will Never be Defeated! is no less clear for Levit. He first met Rzewski himself some 10 years ago. As an avid collector, he had stumbled across the piece in Hamelin's recording and, bowled over by it, simply emailed the composer, asking him to write a work for him. (To date, Rzewski has dedicated eight sonatas from his cycle Nano Sonaten to Levit, and also composed a cycle of four pieces, Dreams II, for him.) Levit describes the friendship sparked by that first correspondence as 'one of the greatest things in my life, and by no means only as a musician'.

As he began to work on The People United, Levit identified a similar sense of trajectory to the *Diabellis*. You have this incredible experience of beginning with this march. You make a journey. You come back to the march and you keep on going.' He recalls playing it in a concert in Hanover, after which Rzewski came backstage and patted him on the back. "I know why this piece is so long," he said, "because you never give up." But not only had I had that experience, but I realised we do that together: the audience does the same thing. It's a democratic kind of thing to happen. I finally understood that this is what it should be about.'

A musician's ability to effect his or her uniting of people in a concert, to take the audience on a journey, is something that Levit sees as a political act in itself, although it's difficult to pin him down as to how that process translates into the recording studio. 'It's similar, and I don't think a recording should be something that you just happen to record live in concert.'

As we return to recordings in general, I ask about his relationship with Sony Classical. The label, he says, understood his priorities right from the start in 2012. 'I played a crazy recital programme at the Klavier-Festival Ruhr, one I won't play again, or certainly not for a long time: the 12 Debussy Etudes in the first half, the 12 Liszt Etudes in the second half. I ruined my arm for three weeks – it was beyond stupid,' he adds with a laugh, before admitting: 'It was quite cool though!' He went for dinner with Sony's Bogdan Roscic afterwards and quickly realised that they were on the same wavelength: 'He knew what I was about.'

ut Levit's relationship with Sony Classical, it's clear, is just one of many in his life that he lives out with uncompromising intensity: with Rzewski; with his agent ('beyond close'); with his German PR ('she's like a member of the family'); with artists such as soprano Christiane Karg and tenor Simon Bode; and with Thorsten Schmidt, Intendant of the Heidelberg Spring Festival, where Levit gave his first public performance of the Goldbergs earlier this year. There's also a close relationship with the recording team, and the Funkhaus itself, whose remarkable acoustic plays a role in the characteristic piano sound of Levit albums – the seductive mixture of richness, clarity and sheer pearly beauty. He, the recording engineer and the piano tuner leaven their lengthy recording sessions, he tells me, with laughter. 'We three, we really trust each other. We have a very intense time. We work on the music. We tell dirty jokes. But we fight for results.' @

To read Gramophone's review of Igor Levit's new recording, see page 26

OPUS ARTE



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Viva Musica Italiana!



assion or duty?,' I provocatively ask Gianandrea Noseda about his approach to Musica Italiana, the groundbreaking Chandos series that last year celebrated its 10th anniversary. We are sitting on the shores of Lake Maggiore at Stresa, where the previous evening Noseda had conducted the closing concert of the Stresa Festival (of which he is Artistic Director) in a programme of Shostakovich and Prokofiev – 'They are part of my soul,' as Noseda says. Indeed, he has long been associated with the Russian repertoire and with much else besides, but Musica Italiana has been a constant focus over the past decade or so. The two-CD anniversary compilation that Chandos issued last year of excerpts from previous releases included composers that you might readily expect from an Italian conductor – Verdi, Puccini, Mascagni, Respighi – but also featured Alfredo Casella, Goffredo Petrassi and Luigi Dallapiccola, representatives of the Italian 20th century

who do not enjoy such wide coverage as their 19th-century predecessors. Another disc released earlier this year homed in on three works – *La Buranella*, *Altisonanza* and *Salmo XIX* – by Niccolò Castiglioni.

So, is it passion or duty that urges Noseda to champion them? 'Both,' he replies straight away. 'First of all it was passion, because I really discovered Dallapiccola and Petrassi before I decided to record them. When I was a piano player – to say I was a "pianist" is a little bit ambitious – I played Petrassi's *Invenzioni* [1944]. I immediately fell in love. I was 15, 16. It was the late 1970s/early 1980s. With Castiglioni it was even more intriguing, because I met him personally. He was a teacher in the Milan Conservatory, where I studied composition. I was not his student – I was with Pippo Molino – but Molino was very open and encouraged us to have meetings with, among others, [the composers] Giacomo Manzoni, Sylvano Bussotti and Brian Ferneyhough. With Castiglioni I listened to a tape of his

Salmo XIX in the autumn of 1985. I fell in love with this piece. I asked the publisher Ricordi to send me the score, and I tried to sell it as a conductor. Everybody said, "No, no, no. Who is Castiglioni?" And then two years ago I said to Chandos that I wanted to do it, and we did it. For me it is a masterpiece. So after 20 years I succeeded – as a duty but as the result of a passion.'

All these Musica Italiana discs have been real ear-openers, but a special place among them is occupied by four CDs devoted to Casella, the most recent of which - containing the symphonic fragments from his ballet, or comédie chorégraphique, Le couvent sur l'eau, the Elegia eroica and the Symphony No 1 – has just been released. 'Casella is a composer who needs to be rediscovered,' says Noseda. He began with the big, 'Straussian, Mahlerian' Symphony No 2 of 1908-10, conducting from a facsimile of the manuscript – 'awfully written and with a lot of corrections, but the orchestral parts were slightly better, so we recorded it [in January 2010].' At the time, Ricordi was complaining that such a masterpiece was not performed more often. Noseda wrote to the publisher, explaining the reason: the score was a mess. 'Within three months, we had a new edition,' he says, 'so now a new life begins for this symphony. When I discovered No 2, I asked about No 3 and No 1 and also about the Concerto for Orchestra and the Elegia eroica. Now I'm very passionate about Casella.

Noseda is still teeming with ideas for future Musica Italiana discs with his chorus and orchestra at the Teatro Regio in Turin - more Castiglioni, more Petrassi, more Dallapiccola, maybe some Martucci and Busoni and certainly Casella's Missa solemnis pro pace, his last work, composed in 1944. Next spring, Turin, the city in which Casella was born, will stage an entire festival of his music, centred on the Teatro Regio's production of his opera La donna serpente but also involving the Italian broadcasting network RAI, all the city's musical institutions, the Teatro Stabile and the Museo del Cinema. All of which suggests a marked resurgence of interest, in which Music Italiana has played a significant part. For one thing, at the end of November Noseda will conduct the US premiere of Casella's Second Symphony in Philadelphia as a direct result of the

management having heard the recording. Fabio Luisi is also going to Turin next year to conduct some Casella, and Noseda says that his aim is 'to see three, four, five big colleagues of mine take this music on'. He certainly lacks nothing in persuasive zeal.

Mention of Philadelphia highlights the fact that Noseda was recently named 2015's Conductor of the Year by the magazine *Musical America*. One of the contributory factors to his standing in the US is unquestionably the outstanding performance of Britten's *War Requiem* that he gave with the London Symphony Orchestra in New York in 2011 (he also recorded an earlier account at the Barbican for LSO Live). As Noseda says, 'That was the turning point of my relationship with the LSO but also of my perception in America. But it couldn't possibly have happened had I not been going regularly to the States since 2002.' He has had a long association with the Met, where most recently he conducted a new production of Borodin's *Prince Igor*, an interest fired by his decade at St Petersburg's

Mariinsky Theatre from 1997. He is the De Sabata Guest Conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and is in Philadelphia for two weeks every season. 'A War Requiem coming out of the middle of nowhere probably wouldn't have had the same impact,' Noseda modestly asserts. He is convinced that conductors need to establish a regular presence. 'The UK,' he says, 'has been fantastic because of my relationship with the BBC Philharmonic.' (He was at the helm from 2002 until 2011.) 'The LSO invited me because they could see my work there. I love the LSO,' he says. 'They are not scared if they play old music or a piece written tomorrow. The quality of their playing is exceptional. On their best days they can compare with anyone else - with Berlin, Vienna, the Concertgebouw. I put them in the same league of orchestras.' In February next year he conducts the LSO in a pair of concerts marking the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, including such diverse repertoire as Smetana's Richard III, interpretations of Romeo and Juliet by Tchaikovsky and Berlioz, and Strauss's Macbeth.

The Teatro Regio in Turin, however, is probably his pride and joy, a company that he has turned round financially and

Tm not the kind of guy to do 10 productions of the same opera – I might as well just do a Xerox of myself. I want to be passionate'

organisationally since becoming Music Director in 2007 and to which he has brought an international reputation. The discs of operatic arias he has made with such leading artists as Rolando Villazón, Diana Damrau, Ildebrando d'Arcangelo and Anna Netrebko (with whom he conducted *Il trovatore* in Salzburg this summer) are, in a sense, part of his scheme to promote the Teatro Regio. 'It is important for me,' he says, 'to have contact with singers, to work with them, to establish a certain relationship. I've known Anna since she was 25 and I was 30. But what is crucially important is for them to have contact with my orchestra and chorus. That's why I do this. For me to have a DG or Erato disc with the most important singers and the Orchestra e Coro del Teatro Regio Torino is another way to put the theatre on the global map.' Last year the Teatro Regio's concert performance of Rossini's Guglielmo Tell was one of the highlights of the Edinburgh Festival, a success consolidated by a subsequent North American tour to Chicago, Toronto and New York.

Noseda, still only 51, has a healthy catalogue of more than 50 recordings to his credit that he hopes will be 'a legacy I felt I just wanted to leave something behind,' he says. The stimulating mix of opera and symphonic works in his conducting life, coupled with his broad tastes in repertoire, keep his mind alive with new ideas. As he says, 'I'm not the kind of guy who, when I learn Il trovatore, will do 10 productions just to make money, which is the easy way, because after four times I need to leave *Trovatore* aside and take it up again after six years to see how it has developed or not – or if I've changed my mind or it tells me something new that I couldn't read before. Otherwise, I might as well just do a Xerox of myself. I want to be intense and passionate, so that it will be contagious for an orchestra and the audience. What I try to do is bring symphonic precision to the opera and to bring passion, flexibility and a rubato feeling to the symphonic repertoire. So far, I have never got bored approaching any music. If I were to get bored, how could I conduct?' 6

▶ To read Gramophone's review of Noseda's most recent Casella CD, see page 32



AT HOME WITH THE HALLÉ

Martin Cullingford visits the Manchester orchestra's impressive new residence, Hallé St Peter's, during a recording session of Elgar's Sea Pictures

wo years ago, Manchester's century-and-a-half old orchestra, the Hallé, finally got a home of its own. Which isn't to imply this illustrious ensemble has been nomadically wandering the city streets: the Free Trade Hall and more recently the fine Bridgewater Hall have served as suitably welcoming partners in presenting music-making to the city, and indeed the latter still does. But a modern orchestra is more than merely a concert-giving society: high-profile performances are built on an organisational bedrock embracing education and recording, not to mention rehearsals. And while the London Symphony Orchestra has

LSO St Luke's, and even the Hallé's city sister, the BBC Philharmonic, has a new studio in Salford's Media City, the Hallé had been left renting rehearsal space, or conducting education and outreach work, in various venues throughout Manchester. That all changed with the opening, in 2013, of Hallé St Peter's, in a restored Anglican church.

Brick-built in an Italianate style, one of the church's unusual, and fortuitous, features is the use of iron pillars instead of stone ones. Presumably cheaper at the time it was built, they now mean sight lines across the whole nave are almost entirely uninterrupted, leading to better communication, and probably

higher capacity. On the day I visit the orchestra is recording Elgar's *Sea Pictures*, and it still feels spacious despite the number of players spread across the church. The overriding sense is one of light, not congestion.

St Peter's is located in Ancoats, once described as the world's first industrial suburb. While surprisingly close to Manchester's city centre – it lies just minutes from the newly trendified Northern quarter – between it and Ancoats runs the inner ring road. And ring roads can be a psychological barrier, as many a city knows – including Paris no less, something its new Philharmonie de Paris is trying to tackle. But offer a compelling reason for, quite literally, crossing the road, and people will do so.

Manchester is a city comprising diverse districts, each with its own unique flavour and each with its own historic origins. Among the newly prosperous there is Salford Quays, home to the Lowry Theatre and Gallery, the Imperial War Museum North and the aforementioned Media City, northern home of the BBC. Closer in is Castlefield, where the Bridgewater Hall rises above canal-side bars and apartments. And then there is Ancoats. All are post-industrial areas, in a largely post-industrial city, where wharfs and warehouses have, with creativity, been reimagined to house culture and accommodation.

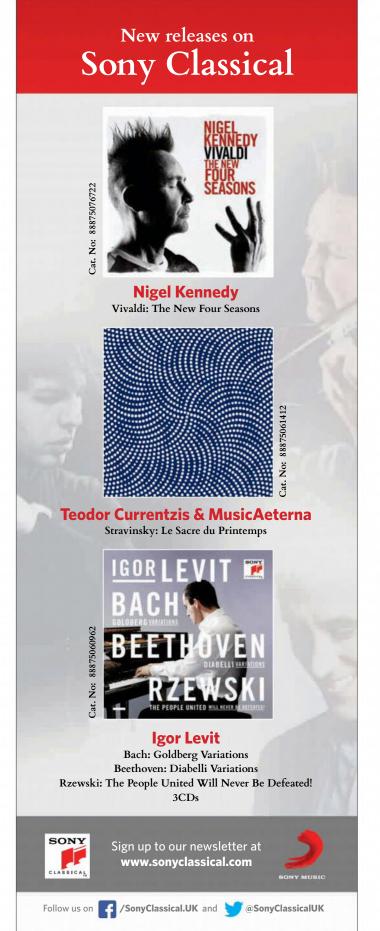
At its peak, Ancoats housed an astonishing (for such a small area) 50,000 people, many of them Irish and Italian immigrants, manufacturing cotton and glass, and later building aircraft and printing newspapers. Amidst this, in 1860, opened St Peter's. It survived just long enough to celebrate its centenary, before industrial decline and depopulation led to its closure. It then served as a theatre prop storage facility and a knitting factory before lying dormant, prey to vandals and thieves. But along with many of the mills that surround it, St Peter's somehow survived.

'Millions was spent restoring the structure before the orchestra took over the church in 2013, paying £1 for a 999-year lease'

'The irony of Ancoats is that it was so derelict that nobody bothered to knock it down,' says John Summers, Hallé Chief Executive, and the man who led the organisation during the purchase and development of St Peter's. The catalyst for the project, he recalls, was the need for rehearsal space, one which would be both bespoke and a constant, offering Music Director Sir Mark Elder the ideal environment for working with his musicians.

But if Elder was convinced of the musical values of such a project, for Summers the values he needed to assess were those on a balance sheet. 'The real risk was whether we could make the numbers work in revenue terms,' he says. 'Money is so tight for orchestras, our grants are going down all the time, so to actually take on something which is a revenue burden was, and remains, an issue for us. But we were spending so much money on rehearsals anyway that, actually, putting that into the pot made it work.' St Peter's now willingly plays host to events from pop and rock concerts to weddings, which helps with the finances but also roots it in the surrounding community.

Millions had already been spent safeguarding and restoring the structure before the orchestra took over the church in 2013 – paying £1 for a 999-year lease – and began the work of turning it into a home suitable for music-making. When asked where the money for the project came from, Summers says simply: 'Rubbish'. A condition of the government introducing





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Carmina Burana Kendlinger Ukrainian National Choir Lviv K&K Philharmoniker

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a privatised waste industry was that a proportion of profits had to be spent on community projects. Local wastedisposal and recycling firm Viridor was marking its 10th anniversary and decided there were few better ways to celebrate the occasion than awarding the Hallé half of the total cost it needed for the initial phase of the project. 'Because it was a special year, they wanted to give something big,' recalls Summers. 'They've been great. And the conditions that came with that were making it available to the community, and providing an education programme - which were all things we wanted to do anyway, so the fit was great.'

But back to the recording session. The music of Elgar is rooted in the Hallé's soul, not just in a historic sense but very vividly in its modern-day repertoire, though it nevertheless poses a challenge. As Sir Mark Elder says during my visit, 'The Sea Pictures were written for a voice that hardly exists now – they're all set a third lower than mezzo. Kathleen Ferrier was associated with the pieces but she never did them all – and it was quite normal for people not to do them all. They would do 2, 3 and 4, but they certainly wouldn't do the last one which is very difficult

to bring off as it's so low and stormy and brilliant.' The singer on this recording is Alice Coote – 'and Alice, as you know, is so extraordinary,' says Elder.

But we soon move on to talk about St Peter's, something Elder describes as 'a gift', adding: 'Everyone likes being here. It has a very positive energy. When I first saw the building, the shell had been restored at significant cost – probably one to three million

- in preparation for it being the home of the Embroiderers' Guild.' This organisation decided not to move there in the end, which is where the Hallé stepped in. 'They'd made it beautiful, repainted it all,' recalls Elder, 'and we felt it was the right size for an orchestra.'

The first time the Hallé played in St Peter's was without any acoustic change, and it was clear at that point that it needed serious work. Elder's request was that the acousticians make it 'dry enough to provide a good rehearsal space. That is its fundamental need, its fundamental purpose – it's a place where we can be forensic. So the acousticians did an incredible job, but they went too far – it was too dry, and there was no bloom on the



Site potential: St Peter's before the restoration work started

It's a gift...It's the right size for an orchestra. Everyone likes being here, and it has a very positive energy' - Sir Mark Elder sound; it was really hard work playing in there, because it hardly had an acoustic at all.' This was resolved, and now St Peter's has an acoustic Elder feels is perfect for rehearsal, and which he believes gives players a confidence when they then go into a more reverberant space like the Bridgewater Hall.

St Peter's is also where the Hallé now does the vast majority of its recording. But while the space works, facilities behind the scenes are not, yet, ideal. There's no control room for a start. Thus, just a few weeks before this article was printed, the Hallé launched a competition for designs for St Peter's Phase Two – a 1450 square metre extension adjacent to the church.

'The second stage is to create the building next door,' says Summers, 'which would provide a cafe, rehearsal space, workshop spaces, a proper recording room, and the maestro's shower. He's been very good about it.'

Four storeys tall, the new building is estimated to cost £7-8m – of which £2.5m has already been raised – and to be finished in 2018. The largest of the three workshop spaces will be able to hold a choir of 150. Summers points out that the new building will be

'fundamentally about singing and the voice'. It's no secret that organisations throughout the country have seized on the potential for singing to draw people of all ages and experience into music-making, but if this is to be a particular focus for the Hallé, it's certainly appropriate. Sir Charles Hallé himself founded the Hallé Choir in 1858, and the choral works which are synonymous with British music in the 19th and

20th centuries are a key part of the organisation's musical heritage.

Meanwhile, the Hallé's new disc shows off the diversity of Elgar. As well as Sea Pictures it also offers the Pomp and Circumstance Marches and Polonia, a work Elgar wrote in 1915 to show his support for Poles fleeing the war afflicting their country. Thus, we have the music of Elgar represented both in marches embodying the confidence of an imperial and industrial nation, and in a work engaging with immigrant communities. It somehow seems a perfectly chosen programme to embody some of the historic themes of the Hallé's new home. 6 ► To read Gramophone's review of the Hallé's recording of Elgar's Sea Pictures, see page 34



St Peter's, Ancoats: built in 1860, and once more a vibrant part of the community

GRAMOPHONE RECORDINGOFTHEMONTH

David Fanning is astonished by Igor Levit's latest three-disc offering, which presents the foremost variation sets of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries – three themes, 99 variations



Igor Levit

JS Bach Goldberg Variations, BWV988

Beethoven Variations on a Waltz by Anton

Diabelli, Op 120 Rzewski The People United

Will Never Be Defeated!

Igor Levit pf

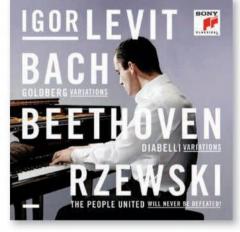
Sony Classical ® ③ 88875 06096-2 (3h 13' • DDD)

Igor Levit's late Beethoven sonatas (11/13) and Bach Partitas (10/14) on Sony Classical have already made bold declarations of his pianistic and artistic prowess. Now he confirms his appetite for the big entrance with three monuments to variation form, each rooted in its own century, yet all united by the harnessing of maximum variety, maximum discipline.

Levit will be stuck for some years to come with the epithets 'young' and 'Russian-born, German-trained/domiciled'. But the instant he touches the piano such information becomes irrelevant. Certainly he can muster all the athleticism, velocity and finesse of a competition winner ready to burst on to the international scene. But like the rarest of that breed – a Perahia, say – his playing already has a far-seeing quality that raises him to the status of the thinking virtuoso. There is, if you care to rationalise, a Russian depth of sound and eloquence of phrasing, tempered by

Germanic intellectual grasp. There is also a sense of exulting in technical prowess and energy. But not once in the course of these three themes and 99 variations did I feel that such qualities were being self-consciously underlined. Levit's musical personality is as integrated and mature as his technique. And both of these are placed at the service of the music's glory rather than his own.

Which brings me back to the concept of the three-CD set. Now 77, and so far as I know still going strong both as composer and pianist,



'Levit's almost tangible sense of mission makes me, for one, attend to Rzewski's righteous fury and flights of fancy with new respect'

Frederic Rzewski can hardly complain at daunting comparisons with Bach and Beethoven, since his variation set *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!* so conspicuously invite them. And whatever one's attitude to the early-1970s countercultural ideology of the piece, its attempt to fuse that ideology with high-flown classical difficulty, or its occasional nods



Igor Levit: Russian-born, German-trained – and a thinking virtuoso

to 'extended' techniques of the time (including some whistling and shouting), it needs to stand on its own feet if it is not to go down in history as a mere folly. Getting to know the work through its dedicatee and first performer Ursula Oppens (a Vanguard LP of 1976), I confess I couldn't get past the opening few variations before feeling that the concept was more interesting than the realisation and that the militancy of the original had been trivialised rather than enhanced. Rzewski's own recording exerted more of a spell, despite indifferent piano sound. In 1999 Marc-André Hamelin raised the virtuoso bar a few notches higher, and by virtue of that fact alone the whole experience became more compelling. But now Levit has gone a stage further, with an even wider range of colour and attack, plus an almost tangible sense of mission, which together help to paper over the cracks in the musical invention and make me, for one, attend to Rzewski's righteous fury and flights of fancy with new respect. Levit's 'Improvisation' (an option allowed by the composer before the final reappearance of the theme) has a summative power that surpasses even Hamelin.

As the intelligent if somewhat overheated booklet-essay opines, Levit is in

> his element with variation form: 'identifying with the particular musical situation and at the same time maintaining his distance from it'. That combination is a pre-condition for a top-notch Diabelli Variations, and Levit uses it as a springboard for playing of unfailing concentration and insight. Kovacevich's 1968 recording, made at roughly the same age as Levit's, offered a quite extraordinary identification of pianist and composer, holding the balance between wildness and continuity more cannily than in his remake



Integrated and mature technique: Levit recording Rzewski at Funkhaus Nalepastrasse, Berlin, last March

for Onyx 40 years later. To say that Levit can withstand the comparison is the highest praise. Among other outstanding recorded accounts, Anderszewski is more temperamental and occasionally extreme, sometimes making Levit sound a fraction ordinary (as in the state of grace he finds for the final Tempo di menuetto) but more often raising suspicions of mere striving for effect. Schiff on ECM demands to be heard, not only for his own merits but for offering parallel versions on a 1921 Bechstein and a wonderfully clattery fortepiano from 100 years earlier.

Levit's Goldberg Variations range themselves more naturally alongside the patrician intelligence of a Perahia than with the sui generis extremes of a Glenn Gould. At times Perahia's imagination in repeats

arguably betokens a fraction more wisdom. But such fine nuances only emerge in the dutiful process of comparison, rather than in the wholly absorbing experience of Levit traversing another musical peak. Top-notch recording quality, too. If a finer piano recording comes my way this year I shall be delighted, but frankly also astonished. **G** Bach - selected comparisons:

Gould (4/93^R, 8/93^R) (1955 and 1981) (SONY) 88725 41182-2

Perahia (12/00) (SONY) SK89243 Beethoven - selected comparisons:

Kovacevich (1/69^R, 8/90^R) (PHIL) 478 6452DC6

Anderszewski (8/01) (VIRG) 545468-2

Kovacevich (1/09) (ONYX) ONYX4035 Schiff (12/13) (ECM) 481 0446

Rzewski - selected comparisons:

Hamelin (7/99) (HYPE) CDA67077 Rzewski (11/02) (NONE) 7559 79623-2

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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in

Orchestral



Hannah Nepil welcomes some fine Dvořák from Sebastian Klinger:

"The contours of the dancing rhythms are meticulously chiselled, without once coming across as self-conscious" ► REVIEW ON PAGE 32



Mike Ashman listens to a new disc of Offenbach from Neeme Järvi:

'We have quite a chunk of the music Offenbach actually wrote in the order in which he wrote it' ► REVIEW ON PAGE 36

JS Bach

Violin Concertos - BWV1041: BWV1042; BWV1052R; BWV1055R; BWV1056R Alina Ibragimova VII Arcangelo / Jonathan Cohen Hyperion (© CDA68068 (69' • DDD)



In all likelihood, Bach composed 20 or more violin concertos, mainly at Weimar and

Cöthen, and yet tantalisingly we are left with only two works for a single soloist – more often than not joined at the hip with the celebrated 'Double'. The fashion these days is to return to Bach's own transcriptions for keyboard as a repository for some speculative reworkings, and this approach inspires Alina Ibragimova's varied, committed and poised readings of five solo concertos.

Defining the landscape is Jonathan Cohen's elegant and spontaneously coloured palette summoned from Arcangelo, heard so startlingly in a fine Mass in B minor last year (11/14) and now redeployed to provide a sensuous 'period' accompaniment to Ibragimova's style-aware modern playing. How far we have come in blurring the boundaries of previously polarised Baroque performing traditions.

If Ibragimova is occasionally caught between two stools in whether (or not) to follow her instincts, the best performances are brazenly alive, responsive and unselfconscious, underpinned by the soft-grained luxuriance of the lute continuo (note the assuaging sweet-and-sour hues of the slow movements of both the A minor and E major concertos, BWV1041 & 42) and a highly modulated use of dynamics.

The most problematic 'transcription' here is the A major (BWV1055), a work that has confounded scholars as to its true provenance, not least owing to its low register and figuration that seems almost deliberately unidiomatic. A somewhat hearty, even bullish, onslaught by Ibragimova rather misses the point in the opening movement – even if the clear

springs of intrinsic radiance are, however, restored later in the work. If the strumming lute can seem a touch overbearing, the 'Frenchified' turns, manners and whims bring a delectable quality throughout.

The E major Concerto is triumphantly joyous, and we can also admire the thoughtful conceits of the G minor (BWV1056), despite a few awkward corners in intonation; the sublimely succinct slow movement reveals Ibragimova's vibrato as an expressive tool of considerable discernment. Yet it's the soloist's unerring focus and resolute direction which see her flying through the D minor Concerto (BWV1052) with magnificent bravura. Her tendency to push the tempo contributes to the fireworks in the outer movements: an admirable riposte to the tyranny of the metronome! This is an outstanding and distinctive addition to a catalogue bursting at the seams. Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

Beethoven

Symphonies – No 1, Op 21^a ; No 2, Op 36^b ; No 3, 'Eroica', Op 55 (two recordings) $^{a/c}$; No 4, Op 60^b ; No 5, Op 67^b ; No 6, 'Pastoral', Op 68^a ; No 7, Op 92^b ; No 8, Op 93^a ; No 9, 'Choral', Op 125 (with rehearsal) d . Fidelio – Overture, Op $72c^b$. Egmont, Op 84 – Overture b . Overture, 'König Stephan', Op 117^b

^dElisabeth Söderström *sop* ^dRegina Resnik *mez* ^dJon Vickers *ten* ^dDavid Ward *bass* ^dLondon Bach Choir; ^aVienna Philharmonic Orchestra; ^{bd}London Symphony Orchestra; ^cConcertgebouw Orchestra / Pierre Monteux

Decca Eloquence © © ELQ480 8895 (7h 20' • ADD). Recorded 1957-62



'My name is Pierre Monteux born in Paris, not Klaus Schmidt born in Köln.

And since the minds of men are bound up with frontiers, I have been delegated most of my life to play the music of Berlioz, César Franck, Debussy, Ravel, and the Russians.' Monteux conceded that he often wearied of Debussy's music. Of the music

of Beethoven and Brahms, however, he never tired.

As a young viola player in the Geloso String Quartet, he had played for Brahms in Vienna. 'It takes the French to understand my music,' the great man remarked. 'The Germans play it too heavily.' As for Beethoven, Monteux was asked if it was true that he could write out from memory the parts of all 17 Beethoven string quartets. 'You know, I cannot forget them,' was his disarming reply.

Born in the mid-1870s, Monteux was 51 when electrical recording first appeared and in his mid-70s when LP arrived. Live music-making was his métier. He had no hang-ups about the gramophone but neither did he court gramophone glory. Mainly domiciled in the United States in the years 1916 to 1957, he recorded for RCA Victor, where rival conductors – Toscanini in particular – gave the company more bang for its buck.

This roughly assembled late Beethoven symphony 'cycle' came about largely by chance. In 1957 RCA severed its historic link with EMI. A new alliance was forged with Decca, which was given responsibility for recording Monteux in his new European homeland. After some disappointing sessions in Paris, where the Conservatoire Orchestra was its usual indifferent self, chief producer John Culshaw invited Monteux to record with the Vienna Philharmonic in Decca's new studio complex in the Sofiensaal. Four of the nine symphonies were recorded there, beginning with the Eroica in December 1957. This was familiar territory for the Philharmonic, though they must have been surprised by Monteux's textual purism - his refusal to deploy extra winds or allow the trumpets to turn the first movement coda into an ersatz victory symphony. A fine Eroica in any age, in its day it was a radical one too.

The *Pastoral* followed a year later, engagingly realised with a geniality Furtwängler had generally denied the orchestra in this piece. It is nicely done, though as Jeremy Noble remarked in these columns, 'I can't quite rid myself of the feeling that there are corners that could have



'An outstanding and distinctive addition to a catalogue bursting at the seams': Alina Ibragimova has recorded Bach Violin Concertos with Arcangalo on Hyperion

been turned a shade more convincingly if they could have had a couple more rehearsals together'. The recording is not flawless either. Sadly, the 1959 Vienna recording of the Eighth Symphony is not a patch on Monteux's 1950 San Francisco version (RCA, 11/82) and the 1960 account of the First has its highs and lows, both as a performance and as a recording.

Happily, Monteux's burgeoning relationship with the dashing and prodigiously gifted new-look London Symphony Orchestra now came into the mix. Superlative accounts of the Second and Fourth Symphonies - the Second far superior to Monteux's San Francisco version, the Fourth more than a match for it - were followed in 1962 by a truculent reading of the Fifth Symphony and a trenchant yet clear-sighted account of the Seventh which in places glows white hot. All these LSO performances are characterised by clear texturing (fiddles antiphonally divided), good rhythm, clean articulation and phrasing which is as affectionate as it is unfussy.

For some reason it was left to the American-based Westminster label to record the Ninth Symphony in June 1962. It is a performance strong on logic and low on histrionics, a Ninth such as one might hear in one's mind's ear when simply reading the score. The finale is a touch leaden in places yet such was the old man's wizardry – the recorded rehearsal sequence includes him conducting the Marseillaise! – the symphony ends in a blaze of joy. By contrast, his re-recording of the *Eroica* for Philips the following month is a disappointment. Monteux knew the Concertgebouw Orchestra well from the Mengelberg era but even he cannot strike a spark from an ensemble which had become dispirited and rudderless in the wake of van Beinum's sudden death in 1959.

The overtures are with the LSO. Monteux takes a somewhat melancholy view of the *Egmont* Overture but his account of the *King Stephen* is as lifeenhancing a tribute to 'Hungary's first benefactor' as you could wish to hear. This may be something of a curate's egg of a set but at its best Monteux's Beethoven has an irresistible clarity and élan. **Richard Osborne**

Beethoven

Symphony No 5, Op 67^a.

Overture, 'Coriolan', Op 62^b **London Philharmonic Orchestra / Klaus Tennstedt**LPO © LPO0087 (43' • ADD)

Recorded live at the aRoyal Albert Hall, August 20, 1990; bRoyal Festival Hall, February 23, 1992



Klaus Tennstedt's reading of Beethoven's *Coriolan* Overture is typically measured and

full-bodied, freighted with meaning. And the recording, made live in London's Royal Festival Hall in February 1992, is pleasingly clean and immediate. The recording of the Fifth Symphony, made in the Royal Albert Hall during a Henry Wood Promenade concert two years earlier, is comparably robust, though the hall's morgue-like acoustic does odd things to the LPO horns in the opening movement.

That said, it is an acoustic which is not unsuited to a performance that has its own burdens to bear. Tennstedt's keenness to deploy the old Romantic trick of turning the symphony's opening four-note motif ('Fate knocking at the door') into an ever more minatory motto as the movement progresses is evidence of this. The slow movement has at times the air of a funeral cortege. And though neither the *Scherzo* nor the finale labours rhythmically, both labour spiritually. Only in the final furlong, as Beethoven accelerates towards his





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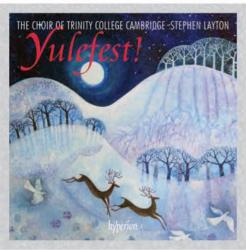
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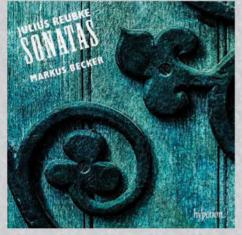
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looked-for consummation, does Tennstedt make a pitch for glory. Even so, it is impossible to think of this as being in any way a triumphalist Fifth.

Listening to the performance, I was reminded of Michael Tippett's remark in 'Prefaces to Verses for a Symphony' about the failure over the last two centuries of the utopian dream which motivated Schiller (and, by devolution, Beethoven) in his 'Ode to Joy'. 'When we occasionally celebrate, as we must and if we can, we do so from a deeper need and with a sharper pang.' I guess Tennstedt would have said 'Amen' to that. Richard Osborne

Beethoven · Mozart

Beethoven Symphony No 2, Op 36 **Mozart** Symphony No 41, 'Jupiter', K551 **Poznań Philharmonic Orchestra**/

Sir Neville Marriner

Dux ® DUX1196 (66' • DDD)

Recorded live at Adam Mickiewicz University,
Poznań, November 15, 2013



Now 91, Sir Neville Marriner was a mere stripling of 89 when this concert recording

was made, during the Poznań orchestra's 'Masters of the Baton' series. Fair play to an eastern European provincial ensemble having the wherewithal to attract such a master, along with the many others dutifully listed in the booklet. 'I just wish all these offers had come in when I was 30,' jokes Marriner a few pages earlier, and it's with the energy of a man a third his age that he directs these fresh performances of music he must have known for longer than pretty much any other conductor working today.

The Poznań Philharmonic, though, is never going to be mistaken for the Berlin Philharmonic, and the vicissitudes of live performances are not all avoided: the slow movement of Beethoven's Second Symphony, for example, comes apart quite early on, and there are moments - but only moments - of hesitancy. You'll have no trouble finding performances of either work that, just a notch quicker in outer movements, convey just that bit more persuasively the revolutionary drive of the Beethoven or the contrapuntal acuity behind the Mozart. The Jupiter is also shorn of the repeat of the second half of the finale - understandable (just) in a live context but a mark against what is otherwise certainly a worthwhile souvenir d'occasion, not to mention an amuse-bouche for Marriner completists, but not ultimately a library choice in either work. David Threasher

Berlioz

Symphonie fantastique, Op 14. Lélio^a
^aMario Zeffiri *ten* ^aKyle Ketelsen *bass-bar* ^aGérard
Depardieu *narr* Chicago Symphony ^aChorus and
Orchestra / Riccardo Muti

CSO Resound № ② CSOR901 1501 (115' • DDD • T/t) Recorded live in Orchestra Hall at Symphony Center, Chicago, September 23-25 & 28, 2010



This concert recording of the 'Episode in the Life of an Artist' and its lesser-known sequel

has repeats in the *Symphonie fantastique* and even the (here audibly) distancing scrim that Berlioz asked be placed in front of the orchestra for most of *Lélio*. The *Symphonie* itself, however – precisely drilled and realised by Muti at the start of his music directorship of the orchestra five years ago – lacks the sheer attack that his younger self brought, for example, to the bold orchestration of early Verdi.

The mellower Muti seems to want pure music, not the messier, dirtier programmatic colours of early Romantics. The 'Ball' and 'March to the Scaffold' lack atmosphere in their sheer straightness, although the wind dialogues in 'Scene in the Country' are expertly structured. Even those slippery basses in 'Night of the Sabbath' and the military band winds in the 'March' are heard primarily as sophisticated contributions from virtuoso orchestral sections. Their problems are solved, their novelty rather blunted in this smooth, efficient play-through at marginally more relaxed tempi than the Philadelphia Orchestra on Muti's earlier recording (Warner, 7/85). If your aural imagination hasn't been shaken and stirred by the historically informed work of Minkowski, Gardiner or Norrington into wanting a richer kaleidoscope of sound and tempi, you may well be satisfied by the level of performance here. Yet Beecham, Bernstein, Boulez, Colin Davis, Klemperer or Markevitch all have better-defined things to say with modern instruments too.

The six musical scenes of *Lélio* contain some first-grade Berlioz, not least the '*Tempest* Fantasy' which, but for the expense of its chorus, could be as much of a concert item as his other overtures, and the 'Chorus of Shades', a dramatic funeral dirge with evident influence on Wagner and Mahler. Berlioz's experimental vision in *Lélio* is reaching out to Wagner's: opera as the final goal of music.

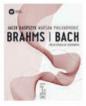
Like Boulez's 1967 Sony recording – still the most important rival – Muti goes straight to the top in his casting of the narrator, opposing Gérard Depardieu to the French maestro's Jean-Louis Barrault. As we know from his Cyrano, Depardieu can 'do' classical as well as his predecessor and can also be frighteningly and movingly loud – but is generally more of a people's hero than the cultured Barrault. An outstanding performance. And Muti weighs up the musical contributions very neatly, never overpowering the intentionally slight nor attempting to tidy up the piece's deliberately throwing six different pots of paint (seven, if you include the narration) at a single canvas. A worthy performance of Lélio. Would that the Symphonie fantastique were wilder. Mike Ashman

Lélio – selected comparison: LSO, Boulez (8/74^R, 3/95) (SONY) SM3K 64103

Brahms · JS Bach

JS Bach Prelude and Fugue, 'St Anne', BWV552 Brahms Piano Quartet No 1, Op 25 (both orch Schoenberg)

Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra / Jacek Kaspszyk Warner Classics (£) 2564 60751-7 (60' • DDD)



The engineered sound offers a realistic perspective from a seat at the back of the stalls in the

Warsaw Philharmonic's home, the Filharmonia Nadorowa. Turning up the volume will likely make your floor shake before the bass and winds snap into focus, and the percussion in the Piano Quartet's finale has been placed at an all-too-discreet distance.

The orchestra nevertheless sound on their mettle, considerably less refined in the brass and upper strings than the Netherlands Philharmonic but attentive in response to their chief conductor, who directs fairly straight-faced accounts of outrageously skilful arrangements which have attracted flair-conductors such as Ozawa, Rozhdestvensky and Tilson Thomas. The inflated march at the centre of the Piano Quartet's Andante booms and rattles away, though before finding a want of subtlety it is as well to bear in mind that Brahms scored the Academic Festival Overture for similarly outsize forces, and we know what satiric fun he had with that. Kaspszyk sharpens the expressionist blade of Schoenberg's knife through the Intermezzo, but the finale takes too long to shake off a contented lethargy. The St Anne Prelude is similarly undone by a lumbering compromise between orchestral legato and smart dotted rhythms particular to the idiom (Hungarian or French, as it may be) in each case.

Still, criticism of finer details runs the risk of missing the point, when this oversize cardboard package has been designed as a marketing tool for the orchestra on its increasingly frequent foreign tours. Its members are pictured and diligently listed in a 24-page booklet, with biographies in Polish and English. Brahms and Schoenberg get a smaller booklet to themselves. Peter Quantrill

Brahms

Symphony No 4, Op 98.

Hungarian Dances - No 3; No 7; No 11

Budapest Festival Orchestra / Iván Fischer

Channel Classics © ______ CCSSA35315

(51' • DDD/DSD)



From the first, there has been debate over how Brahms's tragic Fourth Symphony is

best performed. The logically minded Hans von Bülow conducted the premiere, but after taking over the subsequent tour Brahms reported, 'In those concerts I couldn't make enough slowings and accelerations.' It was ever thus. Logic versus passion: Weingartner versus de Sabata, Toscanini versus Furtwängler. Then once in a blue moon the two are amalgamated, as in Carlos Kleiber's phenomenal recording.

One thing the Fourth Symphony must have is a feeling of inexorability: clarity of texture linked to a sense of line and a continuing forward motion. And that, alas, is something the new Budapest performance rather obviously lacks, not least in the first movement, where an overreverberant acoustic (at any rate where quiet wind and upper-string detailing is concerned) appears to have been too little noted by the conductor. Writing in these columns in April 1938, WR Anderson commended Weingartner and his Columbia engineers for allowing him 'the best chance of recognising every phrase and every inner part, as well as allowing the breadth of the tragic drama to take hold of the mind'. Neither time nor advancing technology obviates the need for such care.

Fischer's reading is on the slow side, though it is by no means the slowest on record. Barbirolli probably wins that palm with his gloriously sounded and yet still inexorable 1967 Vienna Philharmonic recording (EMI, 3/69 – nla). Fischer's performance, however, often lacks impetus. Some of this is down to overfussy detailing but there are times, such as the midway section of the great

Passacaglia, where he is inclined to dawdle.

Judged by the clock, Fischer's pacing bears certain similarities to Karajan's 1978 Berlin performance (a model of classical severity) and Kleiber's Vienna Philharmonic account. Sadly it has none of their tragic force. Nor is it in the same league where quality of recording and orchestral playing are concerned. As for the fill-ups, make of them what you will. To misquote Albany at the end of *King Lear*, 'These are but trifles here.' Richard Osborne

BPO, de Sabata (9/39^R) (DG) 477 9386GDO BPO, Karajan (10/78^R) (DG) 474 263-2GX2 VPO, Kleiber (4/81^R) (DG) 457 706-2GOR BPO, Furtwängler (2/96^R) (EMI) 565513-2 Philb Orch, Toscanini (r1952) (3/00) (TEST) SBT3167

Casella



'Orchestral Works, Vol 4' Elegia eroica, Op 29. Symphony No 1, Op 5. Symphonic Fragments from 'Le couvent sur l'eau', Op 19^a

^aGillian Keith sop

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / Gianandrea Noseda Chandos (E) CHAN10880 (77' • DDD)



Gianandrea Noseda's Casella reappraisal for Chandos, among his most significant

achievements to date, has radically shifted our perspectives on one of the finest if most neglected Italian composers of the post-Puccini generation. The fourth instalment, the equal of its predecessors, flanks the *Elegia eroica* of 1916 with two works from Casella's Paris period – the First Symphony of 1906 and the Symphonic Fragments from the 1913 ballet *Le couvent sur l'eau*. Both have slightly curious histories.

Finicky about his own music, Casella dismissed the symphony as juvenile and the ballet - it was offered to Diaghilev, who rejected it – as derivative, though we might now question his judgement in both cases. Le couvent sur l'eau evokes Venice as a place of decaying, sinister beauty, with faded allusions to Baroque suites, a dark, post-Impressionist tinge in the scoring and a disembodied soprano voice weaving its way through its textures. The symphony, meanwhile, reveals its influences a bit too obviously in places but shows a powerful dramatic imagination at work. There are echoes of Borodin in the ferocious first movement (Casella's enthusiasm for Russian music was fostered by his teacher, Fauré) and of Mahler in the Adagio, which Casella, confusingly, also included, in a

revised version, in his Second Symphony of 1908. His mature ability to filter his influences through his imagination to create something utterly original, meanwhile, informs the *Elegia*, which blends Mahlerian anguish with Stravinskian rhythmic violence in a lament for an unknown soldier killed in the First World War. It's a shattering work, one of his greatest.

As with the series as a whole, the performances are exemplary. Noseda's familiar combination of rigour and emotional extremism is in evidence throughout. The symphony seethes with tension and excitement, even in the lengthy finale where the material is occasionally repetitive. Elegia eroica, all the more powerful for being so tautly controlled, is even more unnerving here than in Noseda's performance at the 2014 Proms, while Le couvent sur l'eau is all creepily effective detail and menacing grandeur. Gillian Keith is the aptly glacial-sounding soprano, and the playing throughout is terrific in its intensity and panache. Highly recommended. Tim Ashley

Chopin

Piano Concerto No 1, Op 11^a. Cello Sonata, Op 65^b. Introduction and Polonaise brillante, Op 3^b

Mischa Maisky vc Martha Argerich pf

aSinfonia Varsovia / Jacek Kaspszyk

Fryderyk Chopin Institute (P) NIFCCD038

(79' • DDD)

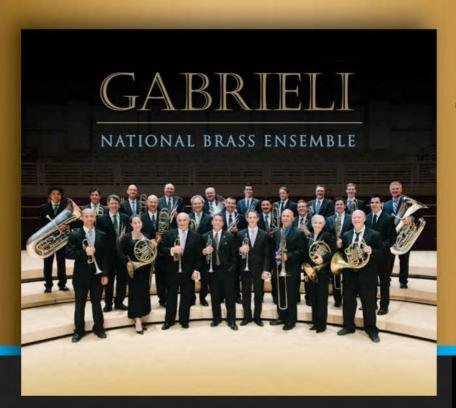
Recorded live at the National Philharmonic Concert Hall, Warsaw, August ^a27 & ^b28, 2010



I've lost count of Argerich's many recordings of the First Chopin Concerto but

what remains extraordinary is how each one uncovers new facets and details of the piece; such is her hyper-reactivity and spontaneity that the music comes alive in different ways each time. This one, with Sinfonia Varsovia and Jacek Kaspszyk, was caught at the Chopin Festival in Warsaw in August 2010.

The orchestral *tuttis* are given straight, without the sense of unearthing new details that was so striking about Jun Märkl's direction of the Scottish CO for Fliter – but the point here is surely Argerich's pianism. She seems to stop time itself through sheer eloquence in the solo passages, while being effortlessly reactive and playful in the many *scherzo*-ish moments. What's impressive about Kaspszyk is the way he manages to follow her unpredictable lead almost unfailingly.



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The reading is also full of deliciously spontaneous touches – duetting with an oboe here, a bassoon there. The finale, steadier than some of Argerich's previous performances, is alive with incident, and the glistening, glittering ending demonstrates marvellously crisp passagework from this eternally youthful pianist.

A day after the concerto, Argerich was back for more, this time in the company of Mischa Maisky. That this is a phenomenal partnership is not in question, the two offering a reading of the Cello Sonata that is highly personal and utterly organic. Yet here I find an insuperable problem: Maisky's vibrato, which is ever-present and which can resort to histrionic sobbing at moments of intensity. It ends up feeling very claustrophobic in a way that the energised new reading from Weilerstein and Barnatan certainly doesn't (see page 50). The slow movement suffers most in this regard: here du Pré and Barenboim, at a slightly faster pace, have a wonderfully confiding quality. That's true also of Gerhardt and Osborne, though at times their rubato can seem a little overdone. Jamie Walton and Daniel Grimwood offer a fine middle ground here, and they also include the Introduction and Polonaise brillante; though Grimwood can't quite match the electricity of Argerich, he and Walton show that less is more and make a much more compelling case for the piece. **Harriet Smith**

Piano Concerto No 1 – selected comparison:
Fliter; SCO, Märkl (3/14) (LINN) CKD455
Cello Sonata, Introduction & Polonaise – selected comparisons:
Walton, Grimwood (10/11) (SIGN) SIGCD252
Cello Sonata – selected comparison:
du Pré, Barenboim (2/73^R, 6/90) (EMI) 586233-2
Gerbardt, Osborne (11/08) (HYPE) CDA67624
Weilerstein, Barnatan (DECC) 478 8416DH

Dvořák

Cello Concerto, Op 104 B191a. Piano Trio No 4, 'Dumky', Op 90 B166b Sebastian Klinger vc^b Lisa Batiashvili vn^b Milana Chernyavskaya ρf^a Deutsche Radio Philharmonie Saarbrücken Kaiserslautern / Simon Gaudenz Oehms F OC1828 (72' \bullet DDD)



Sebastian Klinger – first solo cellist of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra

 has already committed several chamber and instrumental works to disc. But this is his first recording of an orchestral warhorse. Were it not for a certain reluctance to take risks and a certain emotional tepidness, one might call his Dvořák Concerto remarkable.

It is never anything less than refined, with a natural feeling for the composer's lyricism. Klinger allows nothing as unseemly as a breath to intrude on the long-limbed phrases, and the contours of the dancing rhythms are meticulously chiselled, without once coming across as self-conscious. All of which endows the outer movements especially with momentum.

But where is the spontaneity? The heady sense of abandon? Klinger makes an authoritative first entry but lacks the do-ordie passion of Alisa Weilerstein or Steven Isserlis. And while he does well to avoid over-indulgence, there is little sense of the yearning that defines the second movement. The sighs of regret at 1'58" rattle by unsavoured, as does the winddown from 9'29" to the end. That's partly down to conductor Simon Gaudenz, who tends to rush the Deutsche Radio Philharmonie. But Klinger himself sacrifices tonal range for propulsion.

It's not a criticism you could level at the disc's second item, the *Dumky* Piano Trio. On the contrary, Klinger and his colleagues – violinist Lisa Batiashvili and pianist Milana Chernyavskaya – cherish every note. Theirs is an exquisite performance that thrills in the sudden mood-swings; the second *dumka* in particular could hardly sound more fragile or more impetuous. Most significantly, it's a performance in which the music's child-like charm, so simple in character and yet so difficult to capture, takes centre stage. Hannah Nepil

Elgar

Sea Pictures, Op 37^a. Polonia, Op 76. Five Pomp and Circumstance Marches, Op 39 ^aAlice Coote mez Hallé Orchestra / Sir Mark Elder Hallé (P) CDHLL7536 (65' • DDD • T)



Alice Coote, partnered with exquisite grace and scrupulous care by Mark Elder and the

Hallé, gives us a *Sea Pictures* of arresting character and flawless technical control. Some may occasionally find her delivery of the text a little too knowing (not a criticism that can be levelled at either Janet Baker or Sarah Connolly), but her keen dramatic instinct and darkly sumptuous tone (especially in the lower reaches) give enormous pleasure throughout. Elder's patient, supple and unfailingly cogent support affords Coote ample breathing space and positively glints with newly studded detail. If I do have just one other

tiny regret, it concerns the opulent closing pages of 'Sabbath Morning at Sea', where I always crave the irresistible heft provided by Elgar's optional organ part (such a memorable component on Vernon Handley's LPO account with Bernadette Greevy – CfP, 11/81). No matter, this is definitely a *Sea Pictures* to experience for yourselves.

Elder and his estimable orchestra also shine in the remainder of the programme. Completed in July 1915, the rousing wartime tribute *Polonia* genuinely warms the cockles - a reading of treasurable fire, commitment and pliability - and it's followed by comparably dashing advocacy for the Pomp and Circumstance Marches. Brimful of athletic swagger, eagle-eyed observation and combustible spontaneity, this is music-making to make you appreciate afresh the communicative flair and consummate craft of Elgar's indelible inspiration. How giddily affirmative those big tunes in Nos 1, 4 and 5 sound here, and what feisty rhythmic snap Elder brings to Nos 2 and 3 in particular. All in all, Elder's is a ripely engineered performance to rank alongside another uncommonly articulate Pomp and Circumstance from Manchester, namely Andrew Davis's with the BBC Philharmonic (Chandos, 7/12). An altogether most invigorating release, this, and not to be missed. Andrew Achenbach

Graugaard

Venus^a. Book of Throws^b.

Layers of Earth^c. Three Places^d

'lan Shafer ob aPatti Kilroy on Patrick Swoboda db

bJean-Michel Pilc pf NYU Contemporary Music

Ensemble, Percussion Ensemble and Symphony

Orchestra / Jens Georg Bachmann,

bcd Jonathan Haas



If you don't want to know about the scientific plotting behind this music,

look away now (skip to the next paragraph). In a kind of short-circuiting of so many principles we associate with experimental music, the Danish composer Lars Graugaard has used computer software to determine what specifics of scoring (including performance directions) prompt the readiest of emotional responses in humans. The result is music 'steered through real emotions...perceivable by the listener', according to a booklet-note by Alejandro Guarello. A dangerous game: undermining one's credentials with just

about every faction of compositional thought bar commercial pop?

But while experimental music can be more concerned with process than result, the fruits of Graugaard's experiments (and we have to take Guarello's word for what those experiments consists of) sound...well, quite pleasing to the ear, mostly due to the clarity of the gestures. But there's more at play besides: the power-loss (this a conscious feature) in *Venus* is aurally fascinating and neatly scored; the geometric patterning of *Layers of Earth* has a certain delicacy; *Three Places* underlines Graugaard's keen ear for instrumental sonority.

Book of Throws takes the concept further, including a fully improvised solo piano part played against a notated score that the pianist isn't to have seen or heard previously (thus it can't be performed by the same pianist twice). It's reactive and organic to an extent, but a certain stasis creeps in too; here and elsewhere, those 'emotions' can feel contained (and yes, preordained), missing rawness and spontaneity even in improvisation. Impressive performances from talented New York students and their dedicated professors; but I do wonder how differently I'd have reacted had I not known of the science behind the scores. Andrew Mellor

Haydn

Symphonies - No 52; No 53, 'L'Impériale'; No 59. 'Fire'

Royal Northern Sinfonia / Rebecca Miller Signum (F) SIGCD434 (70' • DDD)



Rebecca Miller has already proved her credentials at the more angsty end of the

18th-century symphony with her Editor's Choice CPE Bach disc (5/15). Now she turns to the first manifestation of the Berlin Bach's influence in a pair of works in Haydn's *Sturm und Drang* style, plus one from a little later.

These are endlessly fascinating symphonies, symptoms of Haydn's isolation at Eszterháza – the grand palace that Prince Nicolaus 'The Magnificent' built on a Hungarian swamp – and his furious innovation in orchestral and compositional technique. The *Fire* Symphony (late 1760s) crackles away with *tremolando* strings and hysterical horns, while the C minor work, No 52 (early 1770s), majors on the stark, Gluckian language Haydn was injecting into his symphonic writing at that time, complete

with neo-Baroque falling diminished seventh figures and sudden extremes of dynamics. Miller fields a well-drilled string band of 24 players and allows her horn players off the leash to provide all the effects Haydn dreamt up for them – especially in the glorious high registers of the *Fire* Symphony.

No 53 comes from towards the end of the 1770s, when Haydn was cultivating a more consciously 'entertaining' style, and it is this work that is most successful on this disc. Flute and timpani add to a larger palette of sounds and the grandeur of the work seems to suit Miller's imaginative approach, with some especially effective phrasing. As a bonus, a second version of the finale (in fact the boisterous Overture, HobIa/7, also later adapted for Symphony No 62) provides a contrast with the more demure first version.

These admirable performances make a worthwhile addition to the catalogue of the often-neglected middle-period symphonies. Just for comparison, I turned to favourite recordings by Harnoncourt in Nos 53 and 59. There the Vienna Concentus Musicus throw themselves at this music with just a touch more abandon and Harnoncourt revels in Haydn's effects just a touch more gleefully – even if he only

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offers the one finale for *L'Impériale*. Miller for some reason includes a harpsichord in No 59 but not in the others. **David Threasher** *Symphonies Nos 53 & 69 – selected comparison: CMW*, *Harnoncourt* (6/94^R, 4/95^R, 1/09)
(WACL) 2564 69650-6

Haydn

Symphonies - No 102; No 103, 'Drumroll'; No 104, 'London'

Cappella Coloniensis / Bruno Weil



Having now heard all six of the second set of 'London' Symphonies in this series by Bruno

Weil, I have to say I've enjoyed them greatly. I reviewed Nos 99-101 in January 2014 and my thoughts there apply largely here, too. More so than last time, though, this recording feels viscerally live, and not necessarily in the best way possible: audience shuffling is too audible and there are odd lapses of ensemble and intonation. The wonderful, hushed Parsifalian opening of No 102, for example, sounds a touch hesitant and would surely have been retaken in a studio environment.

Nevertheless, these are, once again, bushy-tailed performances, on the brisk side throughout, never letting slow movements linger and trotting through minuets. There's nothing wrong with a jaunty approach to tempo but one finds that slow introductions in particular distil less sense of expectation this way, and slow movements can seem too pat when not allowed to linger a little longer. But Weil's performances reminded me rather of the boisterousness of the late Frans Brüggen's – also live, from the Concertgebouw during the 1980s and '90s.

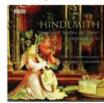
The period-instrument choice also includes the very likeable 'London' Symphonies from Marc Minkowski, who coaxes similarly explosive concert performances from his Louvre musicians. (Kuijken's 1990s DHM set is long deleted.) I suspect though, despite Weil's obvious knowledge and love of this music, that his will not be a first choice. Brüggen's 'Londons' are now only available to download (Philips) but Minkowski's come in a four-disc box for well under £30.

David Threasher

Selected comparison: Musiciens du Louvre, Minkowski (9/10) (NAIV) V5176

Hindemith

Symphonies - Mathis der Maler; in E flat NDR Symphony Orchestra / Christoph Eschenbach Ondine ® ODE1275-2 (68' • DDD)



The second disc in Christoph Eschenbach's Hindemith series

with the NDR Sinfonieorchester brings together the works that effectively marked the beginning and end of the major crisis in the composer's life. The *Mathis der Maler* Symphony (1934), drawing on material from his opera about the need for artistic integrity in dark political times, brought him into direct confrontation with the Nazis, setting in motion the chain of events that led to his exile in 1938. The Symphony in E flat (1940) was his first orchestral score to be composed after his arrival in the United States, where he eventually took citizenship. Though rarely performed or recorded together, they make a significant pairing.

Both are performed with great nobility and considerable eloquence. Eschenbach's trademark fondness for textural warmth and clarity is much to the fore in Mathis, where strings and woodwind are admirably numinous, the complex counterpoint in both the 'Engelkonzert' and the 'Temptation' beautifully detailed. The central 'Grablegung' is slow, rich-sounding and very introverted. The state-of-the-art recording, pristine and wide-ranging but with no sense of dynamic exaggeration, helps him at the big climaxes, which are imposing, at times even monumental, and there's a beguiling elegance to the instrumental solos that thread their way through the textures. Abbado and the Berlin Philharmonic on DG have more dramatic bite but this is superbly done nevertheless.

Eschenbach's approach to the underrated Symphony in E flat, meanwhile, is epic, thoughtful and at times startlingly measured. He is wonderfully attuned to the complex trajectory of a work that looks back from a newly acquired place of safety on an old world irrevocably damaged. The opening Sehr lebhaft has terrific élan, the scherzo a supple, gracious wit. The orchestral clarity is again breathtaking. But placed beside the almost reckless energy of Bernstein (Sony - nla) or Hindemith himself (DG), you notice a grander manner and slower speeds. Eschenbach's longbreathed way with the crucial Sehr langsam steers it closer to ritual mourning than private grief, though his treatment of the

work's closing pages, in which sadness briefly threatens to intrude upon gathering joy, is moving in the extreme. Tim Ashley Mathis der Maler – selected comparison: BPO, Abbado (9/95) (DG) 447 389-2GH

Mahler

Symphony No 4

Dorothea Röschmann sop



With an engagement on disc stretching from the impulsive take of Willem

Mengelberg in 1939 (Decca, 4/86) to the more rigidified interpretations of the present day, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra might be thought to own this piece. Indeed, the expert playing and the symbiosis of the ensemble and its hall constitute the chief glories of this latest (edited) live recording on the orchestra's own label.

Erstwhile chief Mariss Jansons contents himself with a temperate, not quite stolid reading which may disappoint those who look for maximal emotional charge or percussive novelty. There's no lack of puckish or querulous woodwind pointing where required and the scherzo's uneasy village fiddle effect is perfectly pitched by the leader of the orchestra. However, it's the subtler aspects, the perfect matching of instrumental entries and the sensual seamlessness of it all, which remain in the memory. The clash of simultaneous speeds in the opening bars is downplayed in the big, warm Concertgebouw acoustic. The slow movement might be thought undercharacterised - unvarnished chamber-like intimacy is obviously what the conductor wanted - but the performance doesn't put a foot wrong, at least until the finale.

Given that Jansons's Christmas matinee broadcast of this very work featured soprano Anna Prohaska, I was surprised to find Dorothea Röschmann here, apparently a late replacement for Genia Kühmeier. Not since Renée Fleming partnered Claudio Abbado has a fine singer been so self-evidently miscast. The microphone inflates the voice's plush maternal quality and a couple of instances of operatic scooping are likely to pall on repeated listening. You begin to appreciate why Leonard Bernstein might have experimented with the chaste timbre of a boy treble to suggest this child's-eye view of heaven. Recommended even so. Daniele

Gatti is fortunate indeed to be inheriting an orchestra in such fine fettle. RCO's multilingual booklet is graced by characteristically inscrutable artwork.

David Gutman

Selected comparisons:

Wittek, VPO, Bernstein (8/88) (DG) 423 607-2GH Fleming, BPO, Abbado (1/06) (DG) 477 5574GH

Martland





American Invention^a. Beat the Retreat^b. Crossing the Bordera. Eternal Delightb. Mr Anderson's Pavane^b. Patrol^c. Shoulder to Shoulder^a

^aThe Steve Martland Band / Steve Martland; bThe Smith Quartet

NMC M 2 NMCD210 (146' • DDD) From ^aFactory FACD366 (9/92); ^bBlack Box BBM1033 (A/O1): CBMG 09026 62670-2



This is, finally, the memorial that all of us who were admirers of Steve Martland's

music have been waiting for. His passing in 2013, before he had reached the age of 60, left a tremendous gap in British contemporary music, and this double-CD of his music deserves the widest possible circulation. Martland was, of course, a maverick. He studied in Amsterdam with Louis Andriessen, and that influence stayed with him, as he would have been the first to acknowledge. Andriessen contributes a brief text, both moving and amusing, to the booklet, incidentally; there are also other indications of just how loved Martland was, in a note by Joe Duddell and short memorial tributes from people as various as Alex Poots, Robert Katz and the late John Tavener (of whose music Martland was a great admirer).

Three of the tracks, Shoulder to Shoulder, American Invention and Crossing the Border, come from the long-unavailable but hugely significant Factory Classics disc, recorded in 1991; Patrol is from a 1993 recording and the rest was set down in 2000. While the enormous value of this anthology can only be celebrated, these dates lead one to lament the lack of more recent recordings of Martland's work and also to wonder whether NMC have plans to reissue the Factory recording of the magnificent Babi Yar.

Both Andriessen and Duddell talk about Martland's brilliance and sparkling wit, and that is the first thing that springs to mind on listening to the opening Horses of Instruction. It was conceived as a dance piece, and its joy is quite simply infectious. That he was capable of a slower kind of dance, of summoning music that is austere

and moving, but clearly built on the same post-Dutch principles as his earlier Andriessen-inspired work, is clear in Mr Anderson's Pavane, a haunting work in memory of the director Lindsay Anderson that also pays tribute to an earlier period of English music. So does Beat the Retreat, simultaneously an (audible) homage to Purcell and a political statement, containing some of Martland's most arresting melodic writing - it turns into a sort of modern-day Pachelbel Canon while Shoulder to Shoulder and American Invention, written at about the same time, are much harder-edged.

Patrol, beautifully performed here by The Smith Quartet, is in many ways one of Martland's most remarkable works. It is Stravinskian in that it is built on canons, but quite different in sound; typical of Martland is the way he manages to get the cello to sound like a funky saxophone at the beginning of the second movement, though I think it is the extraordinary stasis of the opening of the third that is the most memorable moment. His skill at writing for strings is also apparent in the wonderful Crossing the Border, which, for all its canonic techniques and Stravinsky-Andriessen ancestry, is also a successor to the Tippett of the Concerto for Double String Orchestra. Anyone interested in the variety of British music of the 20th century should explore this outstanding release. Ivan Moody

Offenbach

Overtures - Barbe-bleue; La belle Hélène; La fille du tambour-major; La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein; Le mariage aux lanternes; Orphée aux Enfers; Vert-Vert; La vie parisienne; Le voyage dans la lune. Les contes d'Hoffmann -Intermède: Barcarolle

Suisse Romande Orchestra / Neeme Järvi Chandos (F) . CHSA5160 (78' • DDD/DSD)



This is big-band Offenbach on modern instruments dealing freely with both

ensemble sizes and editions, no authentic honeymoon. But Chandos's notes are honest about the four of the 13 selections here in arrangements by hands other than the composer's - Orphée, Belle Hélène, Gérolstein and Vie parisienne - and so we seem to have quite a chunk of the music he actually wrote in the order in which he wrote it, more than on many selfproclaimed 'Offenbach Overtures' discs.

An immediate attraction is the 'Snowflakes' ballet from Le voyage dans la lune, an 1875 opéra féerie certainly less well known on these shores. As presented here, it has a compulsively listenable range of colour and orchestral effects. These are utterly sensible and musical performances, although the richness of the orchestral sound pushes the style of the music (too) close to the Tchaikovsky ballets that Järvi has been recording in Bergen. Minkowski's performances on 'Offenbach Romantique' (Archiv, 4/07) with cheeky, forward wind soloists are more skittish, dancey and theatrical, the tipping point of his crescendos more exciting - what we hear as more 'French'.

A similar relative lack of French sauce in this case, not enough enjoyment of the military pomposity that is a constant endless target of Offenbach's musical satire - differentiates Järvi's interpretation of the late success La fille du tambour-major from Marc Soustrot's 1994 version with the Pays de la Loire PO (Pierre Verany - nla). If you want non-Offenbach arrangements at their busiest, noisiest and, dare one say, crudest, Antal Dorati's 1948 assault on La vie Parisienne takes some beating.

The performances are caught in lively fashion by a Chandos team familiar with Geneva's Victoria Hall, and the collection makes for entertaining listening – as always because of the sheer sweep of the melodies from this composer. But a more genuine Offenbach sound can be found on discs under Minkowski, Weil (Sony, 1/94) and, if you can still find them, Antonio de Almeida. Mike Ashman

Pärt

'Passacaglia - The Kristjan Järvi Sound Project' Credo. Darf ich.... Festina lente^a. Fratres^a. Fratres (in memoriam Eduard Tubin). Mein Weg, Summa, Passacaglia^a, La Sindone ^aAnne Akiko Meyers *vn* MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony Chorus and Orchestra / Kristjan Järvi Naïve (F) V5425 (75' • DDD)



This is the fourth in Järvi's 'Sound Project' series, and the first dedicated to a single

composer. Arvo Pärt, in his 80th year, is an obvious choice, and the selection of works presented in this recording is refreshing in the way it traverses Pärt's career in a way that is not predictable. It begins with a rumbustious performance of Credo, which the performers clearly relish. This work is from the composer's collage period, built on the first prelude from Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier, and is a symbolic endpoint for that style, in which

Pärt's own music is finally completely obliterated by the Bach. If that sounds unpromising to any admirer of the later Pärt, I must say that not only is it, together with the first three symphonies, essential to understanding the composer's creative trajectory, but is a hugely impressive work in its own right.

The disc includes a number of less frequently performed works by Pärt, such as Mein Weg (originally written in 1989; possibly the only piece in which he actually comes close to sounding like a 'minimalist') and Passacaglia (2003), and the first recording of the newly revised version of La Sindone, originally composed in 2005. This is a mysterious work, evoking the burial shroud of Christ, and is full of contrast and colour, to which the controlled power of Järvi and the Leipzig musicians is exactly the right response. It is also quite audibly a relative of Credo: the forty-seven years separating them do not mask the tenacious inner consistency of Pärt's voice.

A final word of praise for Anne Akiko Meyers, who performs the three works featuring solo violin with a poise that shows a true understanding of Pärt's complexity-within-simplicity.

Ivan Moody

Rachmaninov · Liadov

Liadov The Enchanted Lake, Op 62 Rachmaninov Symphony No 2, Op 27 Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra / Andrew Litton



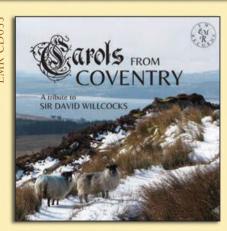
In returning to a Rachmaninov symphony he recorded previously with the

Royal Philharmonic (Virgin, 5/90 - nla), Andrew Litton goes head to head with Antonio Pappano, appending as encore the exquisite Liadov miniature Pappano places before the main work in his recent pairing of the same scores. The results are very different. Although both conductors have an epic, essentially Romantic view of the Rachmaninov, Litton's extensive use of old-fashioned portamento doesn't quite ring true. He patently loves the symphony but, with this orchestra at least, the music's sense of direction can be compromised by such premeditated caresses. There are also some slightly stodgy tempi: Rachmaninov's slow introduction is exactly that, slow rather than particularly expectant. Litton goes on to take the first movement's exposition repeat and, ever articulate,

generates considerable heat at climaxes. The *scherzo* finds the composer's sometimes surprising textural manipulations prioritised now and then over animal excitement. In the Trio, intrusive slides take their cue from what's written in the score, yet one can't help finding them Hollywoodish. Hollywood's André Previn was always more discreet.

Captured at a live event not without a few bumps and thumps, Pappano's Roman band is that bit more involving in a performance which gains in conviction as it proceeds. Litton on the other hand seems to lose impetus in the slow movement and even more so in the finale - not in truth Rachmaninov at his finest, hence the particularly savage cuts to which it was subjected in earlier years. It is vital that the final climax provide the right kind of resolution, finally breaking the mould of stepwise melodic movement with its confident thrusting line. Somehow, just when it matters most, Litton falls short. His insipid build-up to the big tune sounds as if it might have been pasted in at another session. A plus point is BIS's artwork: a striking image, Sunset by Arkady Rylov, adorns the front of the booklet while the musicians wield umbrellas in the Norwegian drizzle on the reverse. Flattered by bright,

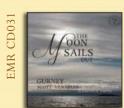




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clean sound, the ensemble lacks nothing in weight as recorded and its nasal, slightly whiny brass and cool first clarinet might even be thought vaguely Slavic. **David Gutman**

Selected comparison – coupled as above: S Cecilia Orch, Pappano (5/11) (EMI) 949462-2 Sympbony No 2 – selected comparison: LSO, Previn (4/73^R) (EMI) 085289-2

Ravel · Fauré

(

Fauré Ballade, Op 19 **Ravel** Piano Concertos - in G; for the Left Hand^a

Yuja Wang pf

 $^{\mathrm{a}}$ Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra / Lionel Bringuier DG $\stackrel{\circ}{\mathbb{C}}$ 479 4954GH (50' • DDD)

Ravel · Schmitt

Ravel Piano Concertos - in G; for the Left Hand **Schmitt** J'entends dans le lointain...

Vincent Larderet pf

OSE Symphonic Orchestra / Daniel Kawka

Ars Produktion 🖲 🥯 ARS38 178 (75' • DDD/DSD)





On paper, this first foray into French territory by one of today's star pianists looks promising. The Tonhalle Orchestra was the first European orchestra with whom Yuja Wang appeared, aged 15; she performed regularly with them during the 2014-15 season; added to which she and Bringuier are very much on the same wavelength musically. 'There was,' she says, 'little to discuss during rehearsals.'

A good project on paper does not always translate to a successful recording. In this case, however, it does - with knobs on. Five years ago, when I wrote a Collection piece for these pages on Ravel's G major Concerto, I put Jean Casadesus at the top, closely followed by Anne Queffélec, Michelangeli and Argerich. I'm not sure I wouldn't have awarded the palme d'or to this recording. The outer movements are so deliciously light, like the most perfect soufflé, executed with disarming insouciance by pianist and orchestra alike, exemplified by the cheeky clarinet and trombone licks at the start of the third movement. Yet the central section of the first movement with the important harp solo is uncommonly eerie, as is that dissonant passage in the slow movement (4'28", fig 4). You could not wish for a more atmospheric account of this concerto - nor a more thrilling one.

The same applies to the Left Hand Concerto with an opening that is truly sinister (in both senses) but where Yuja Wang keeps the texture feather-light in the G major, here she employs the full ringing resonance of her instrument. Technically, of course, she is fairly awesome in a recording of crystalline clarity and depth. Between the two concertos comes a crisp, unsentimental account of the original solo version of Fauré's Ballade.

It's bad luck on Vincent Larderet that a big-name pianist should release her Ravel concertos in the same month. There is a lot to admire about the Ars Produktion versions, not least the sound engineering, but ultimately they lack the personality and sheer panache of DG's. The main selling point is the premiere recording of the piano-and-orchestra version of Fentends dans le lointain... (1929) by Florent Schmitt (1870-1958). The fiercely demanding original piano solo (1917), written on three staves, is the first part of a triptych entitled Ombres. It is, to concur with the booklet, a 'gloomy score [which] brings to mind the horrors of mass graves, the annihilation and great agony of these years'. After it, Ravel's Left Hand Concerto comes as light relief. Jeremy Nicholas

Saint-Saëns

Piano Concertos - No 2, Op 22^a; No 5, 'Egyptian', Op 103^b Louis Schwizgebel pf BBC Symphony Orchestra / ^bMartyn Brabbins, ^aFabien Gabel Aparté (© AP112 (50' • DDD) ^aRecorded live at Maida Vale Studios, London, February 18, 2014



Louis Schwizgebel is the Swiss-Chinese pianist (*b*1987) who was awarded second

prize at the 2012 Leeds International Piano Competition and is now a BBC New Generation Artist. Both works were recording the BBC's Maida Vale Studios, the evergreen G minor Concerto recorded live under Fabien Gabel in February 2014, the *Egyptian* Concerto without an audience and over a year later under Martyn Brabbins.

The first movement of the G minor is more portentous and deliberate here than, say, in the recordings by Benjamin Grosvenor or Stephen Hough. That's fine; but Schwizgebel follows Saint-Saëns with great fidelity (the two bars before the first tutti, for example, are really hammered fff) and imaginative personal touches like the languido section of the cadenza, where he dynamically grades the three high arpgeggiated octave Ds played by the left hand crossing over. Magical.

I've never heard them executed like that before – nor the timpani at 6'01" et seq played with such purpose (nor the flute and oboe so artificially highlighted at fig F, 9'05"). I'd give the scherzo almost full marks, too, were it not for the less than elegant horn solos at 4'45". The finale skips by in a trice and, like all the best performances, leaves you wanting more.

The Fifth, the better though less familiar of the two concertos is, if anything, even more successful despite its considerably greater demands on the soloist in terms of technique and ensemble. Though nicknamed the Egyptian, to me this is more Saint-Saëns en voyage, the first movement bathed in Mediterranean warmth before the extraordinary Andante, a sequence of Auvergnat, Spanish, Middle Eastern and Chinese inflections with, surely, a hint of the gamelan in those strangely voiced chords at 1'51" and 8'13". The finale conjures up the rhythmic pumping of the ship's engines (on the journey home?). Schwizgebel and Brabbins provide a wonderfully characterised and atmospheric reading which can well hold its own with the recordings by Stephen Hough and Jeanne-Marie Darré (EMI – nla). And that's saying something. Jeremy Nicholas Piano Concerto No 2 - selected comparison: Grosvenor, RLPO, Judd (11/12) (DECC) 478 3527DH Piano Concertos - selected comparison:

Schmitt

Antoine et Cléopâtre - Two Suites, Op 69. Le palais hanté, Op 49 **Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra / JoAnn Falletta** Naxos ® 8 573521 (60' • DDD)

Hough, CBSO, Oramo (11/01) (HYPE) CDA67331/2



With his reputation irrevocably tarnished by his far right politics, Florent

Schmitt is one of the more problematic figures of 20th-century French music. Pro-Nazi during the 1930s and early '40s, he is most frequently remembered for a shameful episode at the Salle Pleyel in 1933, when he rose to his feet during a concert of Kurt Weill's music shouting, 'Heil Hitler! Enough music by German refugees!' During the Second World War, he was, needless to say, pro-Vichy and an active collaborator.

Until the late 1920s, however, he was much respected, notably by Delius (whose vocal scores he edited), Stravinsky and Diaghilev, who revived his 1907 ballet



Louis Schwizgebel recording Saint-Saëns concertos with the BBC Symphony Orchestra at London's Maida Vale Studios

La tragédie de Salomé, still his best-known score, as a vehicle for Karsavina in 1913. The two works recorded here are representative of his eclectic style, heavily indebted to Debussy and Ravel, though his extrovert orchestration looks back through early Stravinsky to Rimsky-Korsakov.

Antoine et Cléopâtre consists of two symphonic suites reworking incidental music for a 1920 Paris production of André Gide's adaptation of Shakespeare's play. Schmitt travelled widely in North Africa and his orientally inflected melodies have considerable claims to authenticity. A brassy evocation of Pompey's encampment and a thumping, Sacre-ish depiction of the Battle of Actium keep it the right side of self-indulgence.

The earlier (1904) *Le palais hanté* – based on a poem by Edgar Allan Poe interpolated into *The Fall of the House of Usher* – is altogether darker, combining overtones of Fauré (Schmitt's teacher) and Debussy's *Pelléas*. Conducted by JoAnn Falletta, the performances are admirably stylish, while the Buffalo Philharmonic boast nicely dexterous strings and woodwind. The recording itself is a bit recessed, and not as immediate as Yan Pascal Tortelier's Schmitt disc (Chandos, 9/11), which also includes *Le palais hanté*. **Tim Ashley**

Shostakovich

Cello Concertos - No 1, Op 107 a ; No 2, Op 126 b Gautier Capuçon $_{VC}$

Mariinsky Orchestra / Valery Gergiev

Erato © 2564 60697-3 (67' • DDD)

Recorded live at the aSalle Pleyel, Paris, December 2013; hMariinsky Theatre, St Petersburg, June 2014



The catalogue isn't exactly short of fine recordings of the two Shostakovich cello

concertos. But Gautier Capuçon immediately shows that his are interpretations to be reckoned with. His account of the first movement of the First Concerto brings to bear an exceptional variety of articulation where lesser players storm through regardless.

Is there a price to pay? Well, yes, in that the tempo feels a touch reined in, and in places I sense that the orchestra feels the same way. More disconcertingly, the Mariinsky hornist behaves as a chambermusic partner rather than as a challenger throwing down the gauntlet: this is one way of doing it, I suppose, but it does entail a certain loss of dramatic tension. Similarly, the personal touches Capuçon

finds in the slow movement, while clearly the hallmark of an exceptional artist, are arguably more harmful than beneficial, since they detract from the impression of a lament on behalf of a larger community, which Rostropovich for one so movingly captured. But then no one has rivalled him for combined tonal weight, rhythmic thrust and colouristic flair, or indeed for sheer authority. For all his passion and sensitivity, Capuçon cannot match that sense of the music being dragged from the darkest recesses of the soul.

Nothing much to find fault with technically in the massive cadenza or the finale, though there is still room to make both even more bloody-minded. In the Second Concerto, too, for all Capuçon's command, subtlety and insight in the long opening Largo, there are places where languor and elegance are more in evidence than sustained intensity and drive. And neither the Scherzo nor the finale conveys quite that Ancient Mariner-like inner compulsion that are surely de rigueur for great Shostakovich-playing, while the Mariinsky horns and percussion sound unsure of how to place their contributions, dramatically speaking.

They are not helped by a recording that has the soloist a long way forward –











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Amanda Forsythe's solo debut recording explores a gamut of emotions, from fiery coloratura arias to tragic laments, in a recording that combines rarely-heard arias and favourite chestnuts drawn from eight of Handel's operas.

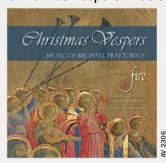
Cassadó Suite for Solo Cello Kodály Sonata for Solo Cello, Duo for Violin and Cello



Antonio Meneses, cello Claudio Cruz, violin

Grammy Award-nominated cellist Antonio Meneses' dazzling virtuosity is on display in works by Gaspar Cassadó and Zoltán Kodály, including the latter's Sonata for Solo Cello which was written in 1915 and is released in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the work.

Christmas Vespers: Music of Michael Praetorius



Jeannette Sorrell Apollo's Fire

Christmas Vespers highlights the virtuosic vocal and instrumental music of the extraordinarily versatile 17th-century German composer Praetorius, assembled as in the Baroque tradition by Apollo's Fire's founder/director Jeanette Sorrell.

Liszt: The Art of Remembering



AVIE introduces Australian-born, award-winning pianist Olivia Sham. On her debut recording, performing on two different Parisian Érard pianos from the 1840s, and on a modern Steinway, Olivia explores links between Franz Liszt's evolving compositional technique and the development of the 19th-century piano.



legitimate in principle for cello concertante works, perhaps, but in the process some vital orchestral contributions are relegated to apparent passivity, and in some cases to near-irrelevance. David Fanning

Sibelius

Swanwhite - complete incidental music. The Lizard - complete incidental music. A Lonely Ski Traila. The Countess's Portraita aRiho Eklundh narr

Turku Philharmonic Orchestra / Leif Segerstam Naxos ® 8 573341 (64' • DDD • T/t)



The penultimate instalment in this absorbing series launches with what is

only the second-ever complete recording of the original score that Sibelius provided for the hugely successful April 1908 premiere (at Helsinki's Swedish Theatre) of August Strindberg's fairy-tale play Svanevit ('Swanwhite'). Lasting nearly half an hour and comprising 14 numbers, it may make for a less satisfying sequence than the seven-movement suite that Sibelius devised for the concert hall, but still boasts much that is wholly characteristic and rewarding. Listen out for some intriguing sidelong glances to the slow movements of the Third and Fifth symphonies - and do I hear a teasing echo of Valse triste during 'The harp falls briefly silent' (tr 7)?

Don't be hoodwinked by the early opus number appended to the incidental music for Mikael Lybeck's drama, Ödlan ('The Lizard'); it actually dates from 1909-10 and a fascinating discovery it proves, too. Luminously scored for string orchestra, it's a 25-minute canvas in two parts containing much duskily beautiful and splendidly atmospheric invention, not to mention some fascinating harmonic and textural foreshadowings of Tapiola. Bringing up the rear are two brief melodramas in Swedish, both sensitively narrated by Riho Eklundh. A Lonely Ski Trail (to a text by Bertel Gripenberg) was composed in 1925 but not heard until December 1948. It's a haunting miniature (the final measures are sheer magic) and leaves a rather more enduring impression than does The Countess's Portrait (a 1905 setting of Zachris Topelius).

Suffice to report, Leif Segerstam directs all this material with unhurried authority, abundant perception and heaps of character. Likewise, his willing Turku colleagues are with him every step of the way. Admirable production values and useful notes, too. A job well done. Andrew Achenbach

Sibelius

Humoresquesa - Op 87; Op 89. Two Pieces, Op 77a. Two Serenades, Op 69a. Suite, Op 117a. Five Pieces, Op 81b. Pieces, Op 2b Nicolas Dautricourt vn bJuho Pohjonen pf ^aOrquestra Vigo 430 / Aleiandro Garrido Porras La Dolce Volta (F) LDV23 (77' • DDD)



Sibelius's Two Pieces, Op 77, were on my wish list for recording projects in the

composer's anniversary year, so it's good to see them here. Even better that Nicolas Dautricourt's recording as a whole offers such a diverting picture of the composer's works for violin with either piano or orchestra without feeling the need to include the Concerto.

Bravo: we don't need another Concerto recording for a while after Baiba Skride's recent winner. But I wish Skride had found room for the prayerful Op 77 pieces, spiritual cousins to the Op 69 Serenades that she plays with such touching fragility. Dautricourt can't quite match her there and, geographical cliché notwithstanding, the Spanish Orquestra Vigo 430 can't resist the urge to heat things up (the music benefits from the opposite). The Op 77 pieces sound a touch hurried, Dautricourt grandstanding just a little, with pronounced vibrato and arching phrase shapes. But we hear the lovely harp, and Dautricourt always conveys feeling.

That goes for everything else here. But sometimes that feeling gets the better of Dautricourt as he digs deep into his instrument again and again in the Humoresques (the elfin Vilde Frang is hard to beat here, though she offers only a selection). He can also miscue notes: 'In the Summer' from the Suite, Op 117, might have been retaken, but I respect Dautricourt's stated dislike of the perfection mentality of studio recording. He brings rare stylistic nous to the Five Pieces, Op 81 – a true salon feeling in the Mazurka, and he adapts his tone with skill in the Waltz's tiny development section even if Jaakko Kuusisto offers more precision and lightness. A nice disc, though La Dolce Volta's 'luxury item' presentation doesn't stretch to notes on the music. Fair enough, perhaps, when you can log on to sibelius.fi for expert piece-by-piece commentary. Andrew Mellor Two Serenades - selected comparison: Skride, Tampere PO, Rouvali (9/15) (ORFE) C896 152A

Humoresques - selected comparison:

Frang, WDR SO, Søndergård (4/10) (EMI) 684413-2

Stravinsky

Le Sacre du printemps (revised 1947 version) MusicAeterna / Teodor Currentzis Sony Classical © 88875061412 (35' • DDD)



Does The Rite of Spring still have the power to shock? Seeing the Mariinsky Ballet

reconstruction of the original ballet several years ago, I was hugely disappointed by how tame the choreography was, although the music still pounded away excitingly under Valery Gergiev's fluttering fingers. Theoretically, the score holds no terror for orchestras and there are countless recordings in the catalogue. For the 100th anniversary of the scandalous Paris premiere, Decca issued a box-set containing no fewer than 38 accounts on 19 discs. Of recent recordings, that by Andrew Litton and the Bergen Philharmonic blew me away, while Les Siècles gave us an ear-opening period-instrument performance. Now, along comes self-styled maverick Teodor Currentzis with a terrific recording with his Perm-based orchestra MusicAeterna

The Introduction is entrancing: siren bassoon, seductive D clarinet and ripe bass clarinet combine over violin pizzicatos that are so light they're almost fragile. The speed and aggression for 'The Augurs of Spring' is demonic, coming in at under three minutes. Only Dorati's Minneapolis and Mehta's LA Phil recordings in the Decca centenary box are any swifter. It's pulsating, yet rhythmically crisp. Between the stamping string chords, bassoons spit out their semiquavers (fig 14, at 0'07" in tr 2) venomously. Thunderous timpani volleys punctuate the 'Game of Abduction'. Contrabassoons growl nicely in the pesante 'Spring Rounds', where trombone sforzandos also impress. Tam-tams in 'The Dance of the Earth' almost leap out from the speakers.

It's not all about power and speed, though. Currentzis gets some wonderfully glassy sul ponticello violin-playing at the start of Part 2, while the violas – in six parts for 'Mystic Circles of the Young Girls' - have silky elegance, as does the tender alto flute in the 'Evocation of the Ancestors'. But when Currentzis asks his orchestra to let rip, they do so with savage abandon. In 'The Glorification of the Chosen One' there is a fabulous sense of tension, while the lacerating brass make the final 'Sacrificial Dance' crackle. It is the sense of theatre that Currentzis brings to this music that astonishes. I don't know if he's ever conducted a performance for

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the ballet but I can imagine the Chosen One expiring long before the official end!

Sony's optical illusion cover image will give you a headache and with just 35 minutes of music for a full-price disc, it's tantamount to daylight robbery, but Currentzis is a most persuasive highwayman. Mark Pullinger

Selected comparisons:

Bergen PO, Litton (7/11) (BIS) BIS-SACD1474 Various artists (5/13) (DECC) 478 3729DB20 Siècles, F-X Roth (9/14) (ASM) ASM15

Trotignon

Piano Concerto, 'Different Spaces'a. Trois Pièces^b. Trois Préludes Nicholas Angelich, ^bBaptiste Trotignon *pfs* ^aBordeaux Aquitaine National Orchestra / Paul Daniel

Naïve (F) V5382 (56' • DDD)



Born in 1974, the brilliant French jazz composer/pianist Baptiste Trotignon

has already won many plaudits both as a gifted solo performer and for his stimulating collaborations with improvisors such as Tom Harrell and Brad Mehldau, as well as with pianists Nicholas Angelich and Alexandre Tharaud.

Commissioned in 2012, the present Piano Concerto was Trotignon's first large-scale purely orchestral work and bears a dedication to Angelich. Cast in four movements and lasting some 33 minutes, it serves up a feast of tastefully crafted, engagingly fluent and generously lyrical invention (the spirit of the blues is never far away), the writing full of personable warmth, fantasy and flair. To my ears, the Andante religioso slow movement subtly acknowledges its counterpart in Bartók's Third Piano Concerto – and there are indeed stylistic nods towards the Hungarian master elsewhere. I can also detect Gershwin, Barber, Ellington and Reich, and, closer to the composer's homeland, Ravel, Poulenc and Dutilleux. What really matters, though, is that Trotignon's stylish score communicates strongly and without artifice, and it could hardly be more eloquently served than it is here by its thoughtful dedicatee, who in turn receives irreproachably alert backing from the Bordeaux orchestra under Paul Daniel.

Angelich then teams up with Trotignon himself in the *Trois Pièces pour deux pianos*, whose pulsing outer movements frame a powerfully plangent elegy, while the three solo *Préludes* form a touching postscript.

Both sound and balance throughout are exemplary. As should be abundantly clear by now, I enjoyed this disc a lot. Do check it out! Andrew Achenbach

'Inspiration'

Dvořák Serenade, Op 22 B52 Herbert Ghazel. Punchinello. Yesterthoughts Suk Serenade, Op 6. Love Song, Op 7 No 1 (arr Schmidt) Metamorphosen Berlin / Wolfgang Emanuel Schmidt VC

Wolfgang Emanuel Schmidt *vc*

Sony Classical (F) 88875 13020-2 (71' • DDD)



A year or two ago I watched a fascinating Supraphon documentary about the

great Czech conductor Václav Talich who, towards the end of a long, distinguished and often tragic career, pondered how, were he to live his professional life again, he'd get rid of what he termed (as I recall) 'Romantic silt'. These spruce, chipper performances by the youthful Metamorphosen Berlin make me wonder whether on hearing them Talich might have been prompted to eat his words.

For the most part, here we're talking the bland leading the bland, playing that's polished, smoothly blended and skilfully dispatched. But charm? Nostalgia? The ochre warmth we associate with Suk and his father-in-law Dvořák? Not much, I'd say. Take the second movement of the Suk Serenade. Sure, the lightness of touch and cleanly illuminated inner voices have their own appeal; vibrato is very sparingly applied (in the expressive second set especially); but the heart-breaking chord that stems the flow at 2'42" wants for impact, though the quieter music that follows is beautifully performed. The slow movement has a winning purity about it; again the soft playing works best, but I can't escape the feeling that the whole production is in urgent need of a blood transfusion. It's all so anaemic.

Conductor/cellist Wolfgang Emanuel Schmidt takes centre stage for Suk's haunting 'Love Song' (in his own arrangement, very sensually played) and there's a trio of short pieces by Victor Herbert, the last of which - 'Ghazel', a real charmer – is possibly the most distinctive track on the CD. The highlight of the group's Dvořák String Serenade is its vivacious finale, the string-music equivalent of a Slavonic Dance. The rest just drifts by in a mood of elevated routine. Kubelík (ECO - DG; BRSO - Orfeo), Mackerras (EMI) and, in the Suk, Talich and the Czech PO (Supraphon, either pre- or postwar) remain unchallenged. Rob Cowan

'Intermezzi del Verismo'

Cilea Adriana Lecouvreur - Act 2, Intermezzo
Giordano Fedora - Act 2, Intermezzo
Leoncavallo Pagliacci - Intermezzo
Mascagni L'amico Fritz - Intermezzo. Cavalleria
rusticana - Intermezzo. Le maschere - Sinfonia
Montemezzi L'amore di tre re - Act 3, Preludio
Puccini Preludio sinfonico. Manon Lescaut Act 3, Intermezzo. Suor Angelica - Intermezzo.
Le villi - La Tregenda Wolf-Ferrari II gioielli della
Madonna - Intermezzo II
Graz Philharmonic Orchestra / Lodovico Zocche

Graz Philharmonic Orchestra / Lodovico Zocche CPO (© CPO777 953-2 (51' • DDD)



This is a puzzling issue in some respects, as well as an unsatisfactory one. In

essence, it's an old-fashioned disc of opera intermezzos and overtures, of which Karajan's not dissimilar 1968 'Opera Intermezzi' album (DG, 6/69) remains both the prototype and benchmark, though where the latter is wide-ranging in scope, Lodovico Zocche and the Graz orchestra limit themselves to the Italian Verists. The booklet-notes, meanwhile - which come in German and disquieting translator-ese ('Des Grieux...accompanies her to the wilds of Louisiana, where his dehydrated beloved breaths out her ruined life', etc) - suggest we ponder how such a disparate group of post-Romantics came to be classified primarily as realists. The question is a fair one, which the disc, perilously short at 51 minutes, doesn't adequately answer.

Zocche is an over-refined conductor in this repertoire, focused primarily on textural clarity and squeaky-clean playing throughout. It's good to be reminded of Debussy's impact on Italian music after the turn of the 20th century, with Montemezzi assimilating his harmonic and orchestral idiom in L'amore dei tre re (1913) five years ahead of Puccini in Suor Angelica. That Wolf-Ferrari's Neapolitan breeziness in I gioielli della Madonna (1911) owes more than one might expect to the skittish overture of Mascagni's Le maschere (1901) is another insight the disc affords. Zocche's relentless emphasis on sonority, however, renders too much of it anodyne. The Cavalleria rusticana Intermezzo is passionless. The beautiful orchestral version of 'Amor ti vieta' which punctuates the second act of Giordano's Fedora dawdles. It's a dispiriting survey of music that should be immediate, intense, even emotive. Stick with the Karajan if you have it. Ondrej Lenárd, conducting a similar programme with the Slovak RSO (Naxos), is also to be preferred. Tim Ashley

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EM RECORD

Jeremy Dibble listens to a selection of releases from an enteprising label that continues to explore music of the British Iles



Rupert Marshall-Luck is joined by Matthew Rickard on a new disc of early-20th-century works

ver the last few months EM Records, a label that prides itself in specialising in the promotion of English music, has released six new discs ranging across a wide spectrum of styles and idioms. Among them are **Havas**, orchestral works by Judith Bailey and George Lloyd, whose In memoriam (written for the seven members of the Band of the Royal Green Jackets who were murdered by an IRA bomb in 1982) is a moving gesture, and a choral CD, Audite finem, from Homerton College, Cambridge, which offers a programme of English church music across the centuries, though I am less impressed by the homogeneity of the choral sound.

One particularly rich thread running through four of the recordings is the solo string sonata. In this time of First World War commemoration, Dream Shadows appropriately features the world premiere of Frederick Kelly's Violin Sonata Gallipoli, written in 1915 for the Hungarian violinist Jelly d'Arányi, with whom Kelly had performed regularly before the war. An unusual work, packed with ideas and a fertile imagination, its mellifluous first movement belies the conditions under which it was composed (in Kelly's tent on the Gallipoli peninsula), while the second movement, more modal in character, shares an affinity with his haunting elegiac tribute for string orchestra to Rupert Brooke. Rather shorter than these two somewhat studied essays is the experimental finale,

a Purcell-like ground (though really a passacaglia), giving rise to a series of creative variations and an effective reprise of the first-movement material.

Kelly's Sonata is an interesting work, though, for all its invention, and the care which Rupert Marshall-Luck and Matthew Rickard carefully bestow on it, it lacks the stylistic focus of the Elegy, nor has it the cohesion of Bax's contemporary Second Sonata, a splendid, fiery, passionate work imbued with the sounds of the composer's November Woods. The other work on this CD, Somervell's Two Conversations about Bach for two violins and piano (in which Marshall-Luck provides both violin parts) continues the trend of novel works, which on a further CD of violin works (elliptically entitled King of Instruments – its three composers were organists) includes first recordings of sonatas by Harold Darke, Herbert Sumsion and Richard Pantcheff. Darke's First Sonata may divulge the influence of Brahms as filtered through his teacher Stanford but it is nevertheless well put together and effectively conceived for the forces. Sumsion's well-crafted work dates from 1920, though much of its unapologetic Romantic language (strongly redolent of Parry at times) dates from before the war. Of most interest here is the attractive middle movement, in which a mysterious Lento frames a more agitated Scherzo. A Howellsian plangency dominates the first two movements of Pantcheff's Sonata (with organ accompaniment), with

particular emphasis on the plaintive violin, though this accentuated introspection is dispelled in the Tarantella finale.

To this catalogue one can also add two cello sonatas, both on the **The Moon** Sails Out, featuring the cellist Richard Benjamin with the pianist Benjamin Frith, one a post-war, introspective and deeply rhapsodic utterance of Ivor Gurney in one movement (1921), the other a very late and substantial work by the 'English Debussy', Cyril Scott. First performed in January 2015, Scott's Second Sonata of 1958 has a perfumed, enigmatic Impressionism, yet it also possesses an elusive wiriness more reminiscent of Debussy's later, tauter, more neo-classical canvases. Ian Venables's lyrical miniatures, some of them song arrangements, provide appealing and contemplative foils (particularly The Moon Sails Out).

In his Viola Sonata of 2013 (on The Towers of Man), Francis Pott proves himself a major talent, and he evinces a compelling fluency in his highly personal harmonic language. His affinity for extended lyricism is not only affecting for the viola's ruminative tone and the rich, eloquent textures of his pianowriting, but also for the atmosphere, the sense of place in his evocations of the Isle of Man landscape, and the articulate, contrapuntal interplay of voices. The same may be said of his impressive settings of Akhmatova and Pasternak in the collection Einzige Tage of 2010, which have an immediacy, pathos and freshness. This is a CD well worth exploring. **G**

RECORDINGS



Bailey. Lloyd 'Havas' Bath Philh / Thornton EM Records © EMRCD026



Various Cpsrs 'Audite finem' Ch of Homerton Coll / Trocmé-Latter F EMRCD027



Bax. Kelly. Somervell 'Dream Shadows' Marshall-Luck, Rickard © EMRCD030



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Gurney. Scott. Venables 'The Moon Sails Out' Jenkinson, Frith € EMRCDO31



Pott 'The Towers of Man' Inoue, Pott, Kravchuk, Phillips © EMRCD028

Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No 1

Gautier Capuçon tells Ariane Todes about how he conserves energy in this exhausting work

he score that French cellist Gautier Capuçon uses for Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No 1 is the one he had when he first learnt the piece, aged 12. Its pages are like archaeology, exposing the layers of his history with the piece. The cover bears an old signature of his, a stamp of his childhood address in Chambéry, France, and the marks of having been folded and thumbed many times over the years. The first movement is covered with red marks that his first teacher, Annie Cochet-Zakine, put in to help him memorise the irregular phrases, and there are markings from when he next studied it – first with Philippe Muller, at 15, and then with Heinrich Schiff, aged 18.

Each of these experiences was different, Capuçon explains: 'At 12 you study more the technique and basic things. Then you go more into the music, the character, the construction. And by 18, I was already starting to play it in concerts. Along the way, all the different things you learn – Shostakovich's chamber music, for example – make the piece different for you, and give it a different atmosphere.'

The version we hear on his new CD for Erato was recorded live at the Salle Pleyel, Paris, in December 2013, with Valery Gergiev and the Mariinsky Orchestra. He says there wasn't much rehearsal time – but you'd never know it from the results. As he explains, 'This is their language. They've played this piece a million times and they feel it and know it better than anyone else. It doesn't mean that French or English musicians can't play it, it just means they have it in their blood.' In aspects such as tempos, rhythmic drive and colour, the performers were of one accord, and on the recording you can hear the thrill of the live performance. As Capuçon says, 'When you play with them, every concert is different – and many things come naturally.'

One of these things was the tempo of the first movement, which Capuçon takes relatively slowly: 'Some interpretations are faster than mine, but there are many examples of Shostakovich where I think we shouldn't be too fast, for example the *scherzo* of the Second Piano Trio. This music is not a running march – it's heavy and intense.' He also relates this tempo to the horn theme later on in the movement (fig 30): 'It's very proud. You wouldn't sing that too fast.' It's also important not to speed up: 'It's a military march. You should keep the tempo, without rushing. You sit back a little, and feel this strong rhythm inside. This holding back and being edgy is something Gergiev and the Mariinsky do incredibly well.'



Gautier Capuçon in Shostakovich: 'You have to dig into the cello

Shostakovich described the first movement as a 'jocular march' and begins it with a version of the famous motif based on his name, DSCH (D, E flat, C, B). (Apparently the cellists' joke is to put to it to the words, 'I'm Yo-Yo Ma; no you're not, no you're not; I'm Yo-Yo Ma; no you're not, no you're not'.) Shostakovich develops and explores this motif throughout the work. 'Shostakovich said that it was just a little theme which he tried to develop. So everything comes back to these four notes, which are developed and then return in the last movement.'

It's also vital to find the right articulation and volume, he says: 'Those first notes have dots but also *tenuto* lines. This means they should be sharp and edgy but not too short. When you start you're in this intense character and as cellists we have a tendency to start too loud, but it's only *piano*, so you have to find a texture that is rough but not fully grown. You have to dig into the cello even in the quiet parts – it should never sound easy.' He also paces himself for the journey ahead: 'The main physical challenge doesn't come until the cadenza, so you shouldn't give 300 per cent in the first movement because you have to keep the energy building, especially through the second movement. You have to give a lot of energy, but contain it.'



The historical view

John Warrack Gramophone, November 1960

The 19th-century concerto's opposition and domination has been abandoned, without a return to the 18th-century's contrast and companionship. The 'cello now leads the music with the orchestra's complete support.'

Natalia Gutman Internet Cello Society interview, August 1999

'You shouldn't sacrifice your sound just because the music...is emotionally powerful. My biggest concern with this type of music is that students generally don't put enough energy into it. But when they do so, they have to do it in a way that is still beautiful.'

Mstislav Rostropovich Interview in Le monde, March 2006

"[Shostakovich] began to play the piano... I was totally overcome...But he didn't believe me. "Tell me the truth," he said..."I can play it again and tell me if it truly pleases you." I replied, "Watch my face." Then he said, "Permit me to dedicate this work to you."

The second movement is elegiac, the string section starting with a 3/4 melody all of its own which the horn picks up, and then the cello comes in with its own motif, which is drawn out throughout the movement. This is one of the moments in the piece that has a profound impact on Capuçon: 'In the first movement you're searching for the right intensity and control, and when the second-movement *tutti* comes the colour is so incredible I almost have tears in my eyes. It's so desperate.' The key is to find the right sound: 'It's painful, intimate, and it shouldn't be too beautiful or easy. It should come from deep inside. Every note has meaning. This type of sound is typical from the Mariinsky and Gergiev.'

The sense of despair is drawn out through the movement, and one of the challenges is to pace this development: 'You have to find this long line, which grows until the big *tutti* at fig 54 where the violins are screaming and it's full of pain.' One of the striking passages in the piece comes soon after this, when the cello has harmonics against a celesta melody (at fig 57). 'In a way, this is the purest, most magical moment, as the sound of the celesta emerges from this enormous scream. It looks as if the cellist isn't moving, and if you don't know the piece you wonder

'The second movement is painful, intimate, and it shouldn't be too beautiful or easy. It should come from deep inside'

where the sound is coming from.' It's also one of the technical challenges to make the harmonics speak: 'Sometimes even if the fingers are in the right position a harmonic might not come out because there's too much rosin, or it's too humid.'

This passage leads into the fiendish two-page cadenza. Most cadenzas are free and improvisatory but, for Capuçon, not this one, because it is so carefully built from the motifs that have come before, which set the tempo relationships: "The construction of the cadenza is very clear. It should be strictly in tempo. Even when there are *pizzicatos* and then silences, the silences should be the same length.' The continuous flow of the second movement, the cadenza and the third movement leads directly into the fourth movement, which starts with violent violin chords in the orchestra, which Capuçon describes as being 'like a whip'. By now, the enormous physical effort of the work takes its toll on the player: 'This is when you start to feel how demanding it is physically, especially if you gave a lot in the beginning, and you still have one movement to go.'

The cello passagework is relentless, with only two short breaks. By the final page, some cellists hold the bow in their fist as they attempt to deliver the massive climax of the work. 'I do that sometimes for the last chords. Sometimes you give so much that the muscles are stiff.' So how does he feel when he finishes a performance? 'Physically exhausted, but it's a great feeling. It's such a powerful piece. Usually the audience goes crazy. It's like they also need to scream from all the tension.'

The work was written for Rostropovich, who premiered it in 1959. So how can a cellist forge his or her own interpretation of a work that's so indelibly associated with him? 'Even if Slava was an unbelievable musician and man, everyone has a different voice,' says Capuçon. 'We all have different stories, lives, experiences, ages, backgrounds, cultures. That's what makes the music so rich. Everything is open. Even if his interpretation is a reference, every cellist has something different to say.' **6**

To read Gramophone's review of Capuçon's new CD see page 41



Chamber



Tim Ashley welcomes a CPO disc of music by Albéric Magnard:

'The Trio is the revelation, superbly done, with an almost instinctive sense of interplay between the players' > REVIEW ON PAGE 53



Mark Pullinger listens to a new collection from London Winds:

Each piece is a finely crafted gem even if, as a collection, the focus is often on humour rather than anything too profound' > REVIEW ON PAGE 57

Bartók · Hindson · Ravel

Bartók Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion Hindson Pulse Magnet Ravel Boléro Pascal & Ami Rogé pfs

Paul Clarvis, Joby Burgess perc Onyx © ONYX4128 (56' • DDD)



Let's start in the middle: Matthew Hindson's piece is fun, kicking off with a lusty

'one, a-two, a-one-two-three-four!' which leads into an engaging first movement. The vibraphone is prominent in the second movement, the music there fairly haunting and romantic, and the finale is high-spirited, a sort of Reich-style 'road-runner'. It certainly shows this band at its best, and the recording is well focused.

Ravel's adaptation of his *Boléro* for two pianos and percussion sounds purely functional but it also serves, in a limited way, to clarify the music's harmonic progress, especially the clearly punctuated accompaniment, while the percussive sidecommentary gradually gains in intensity. Worth an airing or two, especially as the Rogés and colleagues offer a crisp, neatly rhythmic performance with a stirring peroration. But ultimately *Boléro is* its orchestration and this 'masterpiece without music' (to paraphrase Ravel's self-deprecating assessment of the piece) rather fails without it.

The one true masterpiece on the programme is Bartók's Sonata for two pianos and percussion, but here there are occasional problems with both the recording and the performance. Beam up 3'14" into the first movement and the percussion is too close, while only some of the piano detail is clearly audible. By 3'36" or thereabouts it's even worse, and rather difficult to make out whether the coordination between the pianists and the percussion is all it should be. A pity, because the slow movement goes well and so, for the most part, does the finale. Well worth a spin for the sake of the Ravel and

the Hindson, but if Bartók's your priority stick with Argerich and Kovacevich, among others. Rob Cowan

Bartók – selected comparison: Argerich, Kovacevich, Goudswaard, de Roo (8/87^R) (DECC) 446 557-2PM2 or 478 2467DOR

Chopin · Rachmaninov

Chopin Cello Sonata, Op 65. Introduction and Polonaise brillante, Op 3. Etude, Op 25 No 7 (arr Franchomme) **Rachmaninov** Cello Sonata, Op 19. Vocalise, Op 34 No 14

Alisa Weilerstein vc Inon Barnatan pf Decca (£) 478 8416DH (81' • DDD)



It's a bold musician who dares to duet with Alisa Weilerstein. So much is out of

the question: complacency, clichés, safety nets. So much relies on emotional extremes and instincts as quick as this American cellist's. Who has the stamina, and the stomach, for it?

Inon Barnatan fits the bill, judging from this Rachmaninov and Chopin programme; it's hard to imagine many cellist-pianist duos more mutually fond of risk-taking. They certainly don't hold back in Rachmaninov's Cello Sonata, often pushing it to the brink of breaking point. That's what makes the first-movement climax so intoxicating, and why the second communicates with such fire-bellied urgency. But it's at the opposite end of the spectrum that they really make their mark. In the third movement Barnatan finds a delicate songfulness to rival even Stephen Hough's. And neither Mischa Maisky nor Natalie Clein can match Weilerstein's sense of mystery in the first.

What emerges is an interpretation in which no single colour outstays its welcome. The same goes for Chopin's Cello Sonata, whose sense of restlessness suits this duo well: just listen to them dart between the thunderous outbursts and the tranquil oases of the first movement. Then sample Weilerstein's tone at 1'58" into the

second movement, as it melts into something beyond recognition.

Occasionally you feel they've missed a trick, for example in the reflections of the third movement, where cellist Alban Gerhardt and pianist Steven Osborne plumb greater depths. For the most part, though, this latest release leaves few notes unexamined.

That's just as true of the smaller-scale works, in which Weilerstein and Barnatan reject received ideas. In Rachmaninov's 'Vocalise' they avoid the predictable swellings that can reduce this piece to a hackneyed stocking-filler. In Auguste Franchomme's arrangement of Chopin's C sharp minor Etude they eschew overindulgence in favour of honest simplicity. And in their hands Chopin's *Polonaise brillante* sounds both poised and soulful, not just a piece of 'glitter for the drawing room', as its composer self-deprecatingly dismissed it. Hannah Nepil

Rachmaninov Cello Sonata – selected comparisons: Isserlis, Hough (7/03) (HYPE) CDA67376 Clein, Owen (11/06) (EMI) 366938-2 Maisky, Tiempo (2/08) (DG) 477 7235GH

Dvořák · Bartók · Dohnányi

Bartók String Quartet No 2, Op 17 Sz67 **Dohnányi** String Quartet No 3, Op 33 **Dvořák** String Quartet No 12, 'American', Op 96 B179 **Modigliani Quartet**

Mirare © MIR269 (80 • DDD)

Dvořák · Schulhoff · Suk

'Alla Czeca'

Dvořák String Quartet No 13, Op 106 B192 **Schulhoff** Fünf Stücke **Suk** Meditation on the Old Czech Chorale 'St Wenceslaus', Op 35*a* **Signum Quartet**

Capriccio (F) C5257 (56' • DDD) 61664-3





Context is the principal factor that links these two programmes, with Dvořák as the



Taking a musical journey: Kathryn Stott and Yo-Yo Ma celebrate a 30-year performing partnership (review on page 59)

common linchpin: an overwhelming musical presence in the case of the Signum Quartet's 'Alla Czeca' programme, a prompt for musical nationalism for Quatuor Modigliani – though Dohnányi's post-Romantic Third Quartet, poised somewhere in the midst of Brahms, Korngold and Strauss, is quite different to the moody extremes of Bartók's Second Quartet.

The latter opens to a yearning harmonic blur, with a driven second-movement *scherzo* (its muted coda anticipating the evocative 'night music' episodes of Bartók's maturity), and a slow finale where sullen, slow-burning climaxes cast a purposeful glance in the direction of the much later Divertimento for strings. Quatuor Modigliani maintain the tension without excessive intensity, focusing Bartók's style with ease, although I would have welcomed a touch more seduction in the second movement's Trio, where Bartók coyly tosses a mock-sentimental ballade between the instrument (from 3'52" into tr 6).

While Bartók's Second Quartet occasionally looks forwards to his work from the 1930s, Dohnányi's Op 33 casts an ear back to his Op 10 String Trio. Quatuor Modigliani push all the relevant buttons: romance, playfulness, caprice and quickfire contrasts. Their view of Dvořák's *American*

Quartet is bright and bushy-tailed, if not especially rustic or nostalgic. Best is the finale, which dances along at a brisk pace. The fuller-toned Signum Quartet are more prone to ruminate in the magnificent Op 106 Quartet, though compare their opening with the Pavel Haas Quartet (Supraphon, 12/10) and you soon latch on to which group is opting for maximum drama.

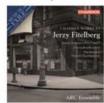
The Signum's strength is in the way they etch Ervín Schulhoff's entertaining – and occasionally touching – Five Pieces for string quartet of 1923. Their lilting, slightly sardonic manner with this music quite won me over, the fast and fiery 'Alla Czeca' third movement lending the programme its title, the tarantella finale bringing the set to a dizzying close. Suk's *Meditation on the Old Czech Chorale* 'St Wenceslaus' is a little too swift for my liking (try the marginally broader Talich Quartet on Alto), but is tenderly played nonetheless.

Given a choice between the programmes here, I'd opt for Quatuor Modigliani, though if the Dvořák quartets are your main priorities, the Pavel Haas, Lindsay (ASV) or Prague (DG) quartets will do nicely for Op 106, while the Panochas (Supraphon, 2/96) and Emersons (DG) each offer a memorable *American*. **Rob Cowan**

J Fitelberg

String Quartets - No 1; No 2. Nachtmusik, 'Fisches Nachtgesang', Op 9. Serenade. Sonatine ARC Ensemble

Chandos © CHAN10877 (61' • DDD)



The Fitelberg you may have heard of is Grzegorz, also a composer but better-

known as conductor and transcriber of Szymanowski, and orchestrator of Karłowicz. Jerzy was his son, who predeceased his father in 1951, having studied in Berlin, fled from the Nazis to Paris and finally settled in New York from 1940.

The chamber works recorded here reveal a composer of broadly neo-classical orientation, who places no obstacles before the listener, but without descending into triviality. The First String Quartet (1926) is pungently Stravinskian, with some clear lifts from *The Soldier's Tale*. Seven years on the Second Quartet – later scored for string orchestra – was awarded a prize by the Association des Jeunes Musiciens Polonaise, and it's not hard to see why its more lyrical, Gallic poise, with a touch of Bartók-lite,

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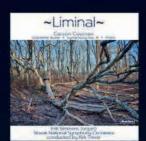
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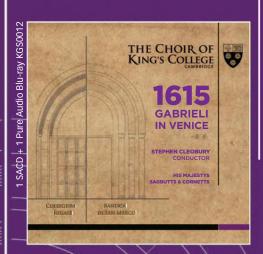
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This period-instruments recording of Gabrieli's music for grand ceremonial occasions is the first album to employ Dolby's new Atmos 3D surround technology.



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should have appealed to a jury comprising Ravel, Schmitt, Roussel and Honegger.

The *Sonatine* for two violins of 1939 is less technically demanding and has no pretentions to the kind of substance of, say, Prokofiev and Weinberg's works in this medium. Equally unpretentious is the wartime Serenade for viola and piano. Finally, the five-minute *Nachtmusik*, hauntingly scored for high cello, clarinet and celesta, shows the more mystical side of Fitelberg as a teenager – could he have heard Schoenberg's *Herzgewächse*?

Together these pieces, all claimed as first recordings, make for an appealing introduction to a modest but gifted composer, especially in these refined performances by the Royal Conservatoire of Toronto's adventurous in-house ensemble, all beautifully recorded. David Fanning

Korngold

'The Korngold Project'
Piano Trio, Op 1. Suite, Op 23a

Daniel Rowland, aPriya Mitchell vns

Julian Arp vc Luis Magalhães pf

Two Pianists © TP1039282 (69' • DDD)

Recorded live at Endler Hall, Stellenbosch
University, South Africa, May 26, 2013



There remains at least one Korngold masterpiece awaiting definitive, rehabilitative

advocacy (the Symphonic Serenade of 1948), despite which the composer has long since come in from the cold. Several accounts of the astonishing pre-pubescent Piano Trio he completed in 1910 have followed in the wake of the Beaux Arts Trio (Philips, 6/94). In the Suite, composed for Paul Wittgenstein in 1930, the bar was set even higher by the stellar gathering of Joseph Silverstein, Jaime Laredo, Yo-Yo Ma and Leon Fleisher (Sony, 9/98). Recent rivals, more readily accessible in physical format, include a coupling of these works by Trio Parnassus and friends. That said, the present release has rather different aims, launching a groundbreakingly comprehensive survey of the composer's chamber output.

The musicians involved are a committed multinational group who met at South Africa's most prominent chamber music festival and have taken these scores around the world before returning to Stellenbosch University to make live recordings. The results are unfailingly musical, more than adequately spacious and even weepy in the heartfelt 'Lied', the fourth of the Suite's five movements. Admittedly Sony's big names, yet more inclined to stretch the melodic

line, offer greater tonal refinement. While Korngold's 'rotting flowers nostalgia' and oddly strenuous developmental workouts will never be to all tastes, the youthful ardour of Daniel Rowland et al matches the precocious idiom of the Piano Trio (not without premonitions of the composer's tendency to inflation).

The recording per se is a good one but sadly the rhetorical cadenza that opens the Suite is compromised by the tonal shallowness and/or dodgy tuning of Luis Magalhães's piano. The design concept, redolent of the *West Side Story* soundtrack album, is classier; the copious, informative annotations likewise. Only the small pale print will not be universally welcomed. Enthusiastic applause is retained after the Piano Trio alone. David Gutman

Suite – selected comparison: Trio Parnassus, Wollong (MDG) MDG303 1463-2

Magnard

Violin Sonata, Op 13. Piano Trio, Op 18^a **Geneviève Laurenceau** *vn*^a**Maximilian Hornung** *vc* **Oliver Triendl** *pf*CPO **(E)** CPO777 765-2 (78° • DDD)



The latest addition to the slowly growing Albéric Magnard discography presents

us with an unusual if striking coupling. French violinist Geneviève Laurenceau and German pianist Oliver Triendl are the latest pair to tackle the immense Violin Sonata, written for Ysaÿe in 1901. But where most interpreters have juxtaposed it with a sonata by one of Magnard's predecessors or contemporaries, Laurenceau and Triendl opt for the less familiar Piano Trio of 1905, for which they are joined by cellist Maximilian Hornung.

The Trio, in fact, is the real revelation. It's superbly done, with an almost instinctive sense of interplay between the players, and a fine understanding of Magnard's emotional ambiguities and his trenchant approach to form. Magnard has sometimes been dubbed 'the French Bruckner' on account of his fondness for grand structures. Here, however, we're reminded of just how deeply his imagination is anchored in traditions that stretch back through d'Indy (his teacher) and Franck to Beethoven. It's all wonderfully taut, with austerely beautiful accounts of the first two movements and a nicely edgy approach to the waltz that forms its third. The finale, by turns lyrical and aggressive, has been criticised as discursive but here feels not a second too long.

IN THE STUDIC

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

- Haydn from L'Oiseau-Lyre
 Ottavio Dantone and his Accademia
 Bizantina have recorded Haydn's
 Symphonies Nos 78-81 in sessions held at
 the Teatro Goldoni, Ravenna, in June, July
 and September this year. Significantly, this is
 the first time that Nos 79 and 81 have been
 recorded on period instruments; the two disc set is due for release in February
- Mendelssohn's Handel
 Late October saw Robert King and his
 King's Consort forces record Mendelssohn's
 version of Handel's Israel in Egypt in sessions
 in St Jude's Church, Golders Green, London.
 This is the premiere recording of the
 composer's 1833 arrangement, which has
 been reconstructed by the conductor. The
 album will be released on Vivat next March.



Pentatone news

Denis Kozhukhin (pictured above) has recorded piano concertos by Tchaikovsky and Grieg in October sessions in Berlin with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra under conductor Vassily Sinaisky, for a disc due to be released next April. Kazuki Yamada has also been busy for Pentatone, recording a programme of ballet music with the Orchestre de la Suise Romande. The repertoire on the disc, due for release in the second half of next year, comprises Roussel's Bacchus et Ariane, Debussy's Six épigraphes and Poulenc's Les biches. Andrés Orozco-Estrada takes the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra into the studio next month to record Richard Strauss's Ein Heldenleben and Macbeth. The disc is due for release late next year.

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Formidable period-instrument playing: Quatuor Terpsycordes turn to two of Schubert's late quartet masterpieces

Laurenceau and Triendl's approach to the Sonata, meanwhile, is comparatively reined in. Though nothing feels rushed, speeds are brisk, bringing the work in at 40 minutes instead of the usual 45. Both players rise to its technical challenges with considerable dexterity, and Laurenceau is very persuasive in the emotionally detailed recitatives with which the work opens, the troubled beauty of the second movement and the sense of hard-won serenity at the close. Some might prefer Augustin Dumay and Jean-Philippe Collard's grander approach, coupled with Dumay's first recording of the Franck Sonata. But this is very fine nonetheless.

Tim Ashley

Violin Sonata – selected comparison: Dumay, Collard (2/90) (EMI) 749890-2

Rachmaninov

Suites - No 1, Op 5; No 2, Op 17. Symphonic Dances, Op 45 **Louis Lortie, Hélène Mercier** *pfs* Chandos **(E)** CHAN10882 (79' • DDD)



The Canadian pianist Hélène Mercier has appeared in these pages on and off for more than 20 years, always in partnership with another musician (most notably Cyprien Katsaris and Louis Lortie) and always eliciting enthusiastic reviews. You can see why. She has a chameleon-like ability to blend, spar or float in and out of focus as the need arises. Lortie and she have been playing together since their early teens in Montrea. They have previously recorded two-piano and four-hand works for Chandos by Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Poulenc and Ravel, so the three major works for the medium by Rachmaninov were obvious choices.

Lortie and Mercier's choice of instruments was perhaps not so obvious: two identical (and very lively) Faziolis which, as recorded at Potton Hall, allow one to hear the inner workings of these busy scores in crisp detail and bright, resonant colours. The non-stop triplets and semiquavers of 'Barcarolle' in Suite No 1 are somewhat relentless and some may wish for a more mellow tone at times (I confess I found the end of 'Pâques' just a bit too bell-like), but for rhythmic verve and precision ensemble, this is Rachmaninovplaying that is hard to resist. The latter (agitato) section of 'La nuit...l'amour' (Op 5) and the Valse from Op 17 in particular are tremendous. However,

Argerich and Freire (Philips/Decca, 10/83, 2/84) show them a clean pair of heels in the concluding Tarantelle – 5'17" as against Lortie and Mercier's 6'26" – as they do with all the best rival versions (Ashkenazy and Previn, Donohoe and Roscoe).

The sonorous Faziolis come into their own most effectively in the *Symphonic Dances*, while the formidable Canadian duo are especially fine in the fluent waltz sections of the second movement in which Rachmaninov, amid all the self-quotes, seems to be looking back to Arensky and the world of his youth. Incidentally, this is the first recording I can recall in which the page turners for the recording sessions are given namechecks in the booklet. Jeremy Nicholas

Schubert

String Quartet No 15, D887. Quartettsatz, D703

Terpsycordes Quartet

Ambronay (E) AMY044 (58' • DDD)



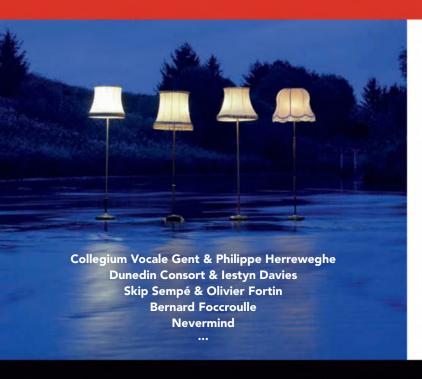
If you haven't previously encountered Quatuor Terpsycordes, they're a Geneva-based

period-instrument group who formed in 1997; this is their second Schubert disc.

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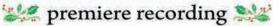
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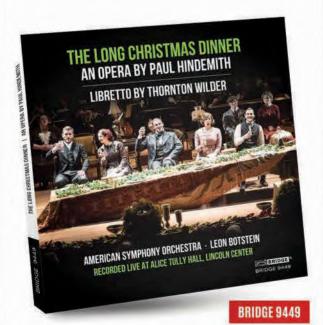
PAUL HINDEMITH





THE LONG CHRISTMAS DINNER

Hindemith's final opera, recorded for the first time with Thornton Wilder's original English libretto



"Paul Hindemith rightly saw rich operatic potential in Thornton Wilder's one-act play The Long Christmas Dinner, first performed in 1931. Wilder's delicate, profound work follows the story of an American family over 90 years through periodic visits to Christmas dinners at the household table."

-The New York Times

"The Long Christmas Dinner is a subtle, wonderfully understated examination of the changing relationships within a family, and of the ways in which society is evolving around them." -The Guardian



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The Quartettsatz is a work that lends itself particularly well to the period approach, and the Terpsycordes are duly impressive, stripping away any excess vibrato. Particularly impressive is the organic way in which the music unfolds: the turn from tremolo-laden minor to the lilting theme in A flat major possesses the utmost simplicity (some are more overtly sweet here but I like their approach), while the sudden fz interjections are forthright but never outsized. The only caveat is a moment - but it is just a moment - of sour tuning at 5'54". That aside, this new version sits convincingly alongside the Belcea and Takács in terms of formidable modern-day recordings.

Everyone will have their own notion of the greatest performances of the G major Quartet, though period-instrument versions are still relatively thin on the ground. Essential to the vast span of the opening movement is the clear establishment of a regular pulse and, while the Terpsycordes are not unduly wayward, when the first violin introduces the *pp* theme it's a touch slower than previously. And compared to the Artemis, they sound perhaps too relaxed. There's plenty to admire though – not least an airiness of texture and some wonderfully characterful viola-playing.

I did wonder whether in the *Andante un poco mosso* they could have risked more: the Belcea and Artemis both set up a sense of desolation in the dragging tread – less a matter of speed than of articulation – in which the *fortissimo* interjections, well honed in terms of ensemble, lack the hysterical edge, the glimpsing of the abyss, suggested in the finest performances. And while they show great finesse in the *Scherzo* (the Artemis going hell for leather, the Belcea finding more vulnerability), again this new version doesn't build to a comparable intensity.

The Terpsycordes convey well the Janus-like finale, with its vacillation between major and minor, and there are many instances of wonderfully intimate interplay (eg tr 5 from 2'57", which has a delicious spontaneity, complete with fabulously judged *portamentos*, or from 7'18", where the music builds from utter quiet to muscular yet elastic arpeggios). Again, there are more extreme readings out there, the Artemis in particular fearless in this regard, but this new version certainly has plenty to say, even if it doesn't surpass the very finest quartets around. Harriet Smith

Quartettsatz – selected comparisons:
Belcea Qt (3/03) (EMI) 557419-2
Takács Qt (12/12) (HYPE) CDA67864
String Quartet No 15 – selected comparisons:
Belcea Qt (12/09) (EMI) 967025-2
Artemis Qt (9/12) (VIRG) 602512-2

Telemann

Violin Sonatas, TWV41 - A1; d5; d6; e8; G1; g1; G10. Fantasia, TWV40:22

Arsenale Sonoro

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi © 88875 06158-2 (64' • DDD)



I'll admit straightaway that it's a relief not to see the words 'Vol 1' anywhere on this

release. Not that there is anything wrong with Telemann's violin sonatas, you understand, which are as personable and as expertly written as you would expect them to be, but it is nice to see artists offering up a selection they believe in and leaving it at that. That the disc contains four world premiere recordings thus seems more a bonus than a duty.

Telemann's violin sonatas are in the Corellian mould - four movements, slow-fast-slow-fast - and their flavour is strongly Italianate as well; nothing here in the French style which he was equally capable of adopting, nor any of those outbursts of Polish folk-exuberance that can be so irresistible. Virtuosity is not a feature either; but Boris Begelman unlocks the vibrancy of music that on paper might look a little plain, achieving the feat partly through generous and stylish ornamentation and partly through a level of imagination and engagement that is consistently high and avoids any feeling of the routine - the essence of good Baroque music-making, really. Contrasts are strong, both of tempo between movements and of dynamics and articulation within, and there are interesting characterisations too, such as the whirring 'gypsy' double-stops added to the finale of the G major Sonata, or stealthy piano ending to the G minor. He is ably supported by his colleagues in Arsenale Sonoro, who, true to their name, fire off some tautly robust continuo playing, with Ludovico Minasi's muscly but shapely cello (nimbly pizzicato in the bouncing Gigue finale of the A major) being a major contribution. All of which makes this a thoroughly worthwhile addition to the ever-growing Telemann discography. Lindsay Kemp

'Métamorphoses'



Brahms Intermezzos: Op 116 - No 2; No 4; Op 119 - No 1. Ballade, Op 118 No 3 **Haydn** String Quartet, Op 54 No 2 **Ligeti** String Quartet No 1, 'Métamorphoses nocturnes'

Dudok Quartet

Resonus (F) RES10150 (57' • DDD)



Comparisons may be of academic interest for this Hungarian-themed

album, but Ligeti's first work of early maturity receives an outrageously fearless performance, even placed against no less technically gifted but more experienced ensembles. In more recent recordings by younger ensembles such as the Casals and Parker quartets, the work's explicitly Bartókian heritage still casts a long shadow. The Dudok Quartet's gift is to hear Ligeti in Ligeti even when he couldn't hear it in himself: in the manically laughing slides of the capriccioso idea near the opening, in the cloudy glass plates (at 10'20" - the album's one deficiency is a shortage of cue points) of what passes for a slow movement, in the absurdist coda's motivic disintegration. The First Quartet is Tom and Jerry in black and white, the Second is their Technicolor reincarnation, but the Dudok give us remastered Ligeti, blacker and whiter than ever before.

From its false-bottomed opening, Haydn's Op 54 No 2 is even more prodigally original, and perhaps even Hans Keller would be satisfied with the 'invention without concession' displayed by the members of this young Dutch quartet, and especially its leader Judith van Driel. The slow movement is a tour de force of controlled improvisation, grave and focused yet fulfilling Keller's demand that it serve as a prelude to the Minuet, which is sufficiently measured that the keening drama of the Trio does not entirely come out of the blue. The pure tone chosen for the slow finale's unison opening enhances its unsettling impact, and only after the furious presto interruption do they allow vibrato to spread pathos through the coda.

The Brahms arrangements are well done by the leader and cellist, though they still subtract more than they add to the originals. The decay afforded by a well-struck key and the sustain pedal is not within a string player's vocabulary and yet the dying fall of each piece here demands it. Even so, the *portamento* and *rubato* here are as lightly worn as is their absence elsewhere. Not since the Elias Quartet's Mendelssohn (ASV, now Alto, 5/07) has the debut disc of a quartet kept inviting me back to think more and listen harder.

Peter Quantrill

'Music for Winds'

'Twentieth-Century Chamber Works for Winds' **Barber** Summer Music, Op 31 **Hindemith** Kleine

GRAMOPHONE Collector

JOUEURS DE FLÛTE

Mark Pullinger listens to recitals by five flautists and muses on the ingredients required for the ideal mixed programme



Kathryn Bryan takes on violin masterpieces including Vaughan Williams's The Lark Ascending

hat makes an effective instrumental recital disc? As an artist, do you take it as an opportunity to put your stamp on established classics, setting down your interpretation for posterity? Or is it a chance to demonstrate different facets of your playing? A disc where repertoire is selected with the same care an artist would put into devising a concert programme is desirable. That means an element of variety, music from different periods, perhaps championing something unfamiliar to spice things up a bit.

Cantilena – flute/piano duo Odinn Baldvinsson and Patricia Romero – fit the bill with a programme where the familiar (Widor's Op 34 Suite) gives way to lesser-known French repertoire. The performance of Dutilleux's Sonatine is a trifle bland, nowhere near as exciting as Emmanuel Pahud's, for example. Georgian composer Otar Taktakishvili's Flute Sonata offers something exotic, 'reminiscent of Prokofiev and Kabalevsky', we're promised in the booklet. Alas, it's an unremarkable work. Baldvinsson finds more life in Piazzolla's Histoire du Tango, but his tone occasionally sounds anaemic.

Stefán Ragnar Höskuldsson's disc 'Solitude' is more successful, containing a wonderful, varied programme which would also make a fine recital. It opens with Schubert's 'Trockne Blumen' Variations, in which Höskuldsson displays spry character. Lowell Liebermann's often meditative

Sonata is hauntingly played. Höskuldsson has fine control across his range, but particularly in his gleaming upper register. The Presto energico finale, driven by Michael McHale's tarantella-like moto perpetuo accompaniment, really dances. Magnús Blöndal Jóhannsson's Solitude, which gives the disc its title, is - unsurprisingly enough – a solo work, a reflective piece where the flautist has to maintain tone across the quietest dynamics. Höskuldsson proves a most persuasive advocate. The weakest performance is that of Prokofiev's Sonata, which concludes the recital, where the outer movements are sluggish and the Scherzo lacks diabolical delight.

At first sight, Eva Oertle's disc 'Lake Reflections' looks like a programmatic ragbag, with 16 different works for flute and harp spread across 21 tracks. However, all the works are linked by a watery theme (the disc's title is taken from Jan Freidlin's work which closes the selection) and it contains some beautiful repertoire that is persuasively performed. Saint-Saëns's ubiquitous 'Swan' glides effortlessly across the musical waters but Villa-Lobos's Song of the Black Swan and Henri Büsser's charming Les cygnes add something less familiar. Debussy's miniature masterpiece Syrinx shows Oertle's golden tone to excellent effect, while the real discovery is William Alwyn's Naiades, a substantial work (at 12 minutes) with plenty of drama and contrast to make it musically satisfying. Lieder transcriptions are less striking, the absence of text meaning that

we're reliant on Consuelo Giulianelli's rippling harp for watery effect.

In pursuit of Syrinx comes Pan, the first portrait in Roussel's Joueurs de flûte. It comes on Hansgeorg Schmeiser's disc, with perhaps the most appealing programme of this flute collection, in which 20th-century French repertoire jostles with Swiss and Czech works. Milhaud's short-and-sweet Sonatine charms, while *Joueurs de flûte* – each movement dedicated to a different flautist - was a discovery for me. Pan's limpid lines cascade beautifully, contrasting with the skipping Tityre. Krishna, dedicated to Louis Fleury (who premiered Syrinx) soars effortlessly. Schulhoff's brief Sonata reveals Slavonic dance rhythms. Martinů's Sonata deserves to be better known; a pastoral, outdoor feel pervades much of the writing. Poulenc's Sonata scrubs up afresh here. Schmeiser's performances are dextrous and engaging, although his wide vibrato may not be to all tastes.

The title of the next disc should sound a warning: 'Silver Bow'. Yes, a disc made up entirely of violin repertoire appropriated by the RSNO's principal flautist, Katherine Bryan. Many great violin showstoppers are here, from Paganini to Kreisler to Sarasate. Bryan has an appealing tone, if slightly breathy, and has dazzling dexterity - slaptonguing and flutter-tonguing in Paganini's 24th Caprice – but there's plenty of genuine flute rep in which she can strut her stuff. The disc opens with The Lark Ascending, where employing a flute to imitate the 'chirrup, whistle, slur and shake' of George Meredith's poem wouldn't strike one as totally inappropriate if it weren't for the fact that Bryan has to rewrite the solo part with sudden octave leaps where VW's violin lark swoops down too low or soars too high. You end up asking yourself what the point is. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Various Cpsrs 'Cantilena II' **Baldvinsson** *fl* **Romero** *pf* Divine Art (P) DDA25126



Various Cpsrs 'Solitude' **Höskuldsson** *fl* **McHale** *pf* Delos © DE3447



Various Cpsrs 'Lake Reflections' **Oertle** *fl* **Giulianelli** *hp* Sony Classical (\$\bar{E}\$) 88875 08725-2



Various Cpsrs 'Joueurs de flûte' **Schmeiser** *ff* **Fossi** *pf* Nimbus (F) NI5933



Various Cpsrs 'Silver Bow' **Bryan** *fl* **RSNO / Van Steen** Divine Art **(F)** CKD520

Kammermusik, Op 24 No 2 Janáček Mládí Ligeti Six Bagatelles Nielsen Wind Quintet, Op 43 **London Winds**

Chandos (F) CHAN10876 (80' • DDD)



The five original members of London Winds have been playing together

since 1988 and a sense of innate musical understanding emerges on this disc of 20th-century wind classics. Each one is a finely crafted gem even if, as a collection, the focus is often on humour rather than anything too profound.

Ligeti's Six Bagatelles make a lively discopener, especially the pungent Allegro con spirito, though they expose occasional problems in Philippa Davies's flute and piccolo intonation. Michael Collins (clarinet) and Robin O'Neill (bassoon) chuckle away in the Allegro grazioso. Barber's Summer Music opens in nostalgic mood not a million miles away from Knoxville, flute and clarinet solo runs nicely lazy in feel. Fast staccatos are precise and Richard Watkins's horn snarls effectively towards the end. Gareth Hulse phrases the oboe's central theme languidly to crown a lovely performance.

The longest work on the disc is Carl Nielsen's Wind Quintet, composed to render the musical personalities of the members of the Copenhagen Wind Quintet. There's plenty of personality in the playing here, with much wit in the Allegro ben moderato and the charming Minuet. Nielsen closes with a set of variations, each tracked separately by Chandos, in which you can sense London Winds having much fun. The wit continues in Hindemith's Kleine Kammermusik, especially the 'tipsy waltz' second movement. Peter Sparks (bass clarinet) joins the regular line-up for Janáček's Mládí (Youth), which returns the ensemble to the earthy roots of Ligeti's Bagatelles. It contains the same zest for life heard in Janáček's The Cunning Little Vixen or Sinfonietta, and London Winds deliver an exuberant account, surpassing my previous favourite, the Michael Thompson Wind Quintet. Mark Pullinger

Janáček, Barber, Hindemith – selected comparison: Michael Thompson Wind Qnt (NAXO) 8 553851

'Songs from the Arc of Life'

JS Bach/Gounod Ave Maria Brahms Wiegenlied, Op 49 No 4 Debussy Beau soir Delius Romance Dvořák Songs my mother taught me, Op 55 No 4 Elgar Salut d'amour, Op 12 Fauré Après un rêve, Op 7 No 1. Papillon, Op 77 J Gade Tango jalousie

Gershwin Prelude No 1 Grieg The Wounded Heart, Op 34 No 1 Kreisler La gitana Messiaen Quatuor pour la fin du temps -Louange à l'éternité de Jésus Saint-Saëns Carnaval des animaux - Le cygne **Schubert** Ave Maria, D839 Schumann Vanitas vanitatum, Op 102 No 1 Sibelius Was it a dream?, Op 37 No 4 Sollima II bell'Antonio -Tema III Tchaikovsky Valse sentimentale, Op 51 No 6

Yo-Yo Ma vc Kathryn Stott pf Sonv Classical (F) 88875 10316-2 (68' • DDD)



What is the most challenging repertoire for any artist to commit to disc? Bach's

Cello Suites, Beethoven's Violin Concerto, Mozart's piano sonatas? No, surely it's the bon-bon record, which is what this essentially is, its title 'Songs from the Arc of Life' notwithstanding. Such a name could, in other hands, have seemed pretentious or - worse - cheesy, but not here, for Yo-Yo Ma and Kathryn Stott take us on a musical journey through life that also celebrates their 30-year musical friendship. Where else to begin but with Bach, via Gounod's gentle transformation into an Ave Maria of the C major Prelude that launches the '48'?

Highlights are many, and they skirt the dangers of slow-miniature overload deftly. 'Après un rêve' followed by Salut d'amour was one danger spot, but such is the directness of Ma's tone, confiding but never sentimental, that it instead makes a telling combination, especially as the Elgar is followed by Gershwin's palate-cleansing First Prelude. And then we're back in England for the Delius Romance, a delectable dream of a piece. It's not all slow and ethereal, though: the Tango jalousie by Gade (Jacob, not Niels) has real zest, while the extended Il bell'Antonio by Giovanni Sollima, with its arching cello lines that soar above a repeated-note piano backdrop, is warmly evocative. Even a miniature as hackneyed as 'The Swan' comes up sounding fresh, such is the imagination and reactiveness of these two artists. Another inspired touch is the inclusion of a movement from Messiaen's Quatuor pour la fin du temps, which is mesmerising in Ma's hands. And by this point, you realise that the title of the disc is utterly apt: this is a meditation on life, not a bag of musical pick'n'mix. We end as we began, with an Ave Maria, this time by Schubert. The recording is wonderfully immediate, as is the conversation between the artists in the booklet. Harriet Smith



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SEATTLESYMPHONY.ORG/RECORDINGS

Anna Moffo

Mike Ashman champions the versatile, charismatic, no-nonsense American soprano who had a natural way of making herself heard and could leave her sound forever etched on the memory

Each of her appearances was

a natural actor's identification with

character and dramatic situation'

From the mid-1950s until at least the late 1960s the ✓ Italian-American soprano Anna Moffo (1932-2006) was trailed as opera's pin-up girl. Reviews, even of her records, kept on reminding one (in a manner that would now be considered sexist) that she was a beautiful young woman;

and that she did far more than just opera – she appeared in films as a 'straight' actress, had her own TV series for RAI (she was seen playing its opening music herself on the piano) and recorded

a repertoire including operetta and show tunes that RCA's publicity suggested could make her the next Jeanette MacDonald. This soprano, it was also frequently remarked, did a bit too much too soon, straying out of the lyric roles which were her forte. The career slowed down sharply with a vocal crisis and a courageous but less than wholly successful fightback, although she stayed with the muse as teacher, administrator and promoter.

But what is clear from every record she made is what an utterly hard-working professional she was. Once, in a radio

interview, deflecting what had become virtually a default question about why she sounded so 'sexy', Moffo replied that words were very important to her. That concern is certainly common to all of her preserved performances, together with her ease in any of the major European languages. No wonder that her (perhaps unexpected) Mélisande at the Metropolitan Opera in 1962 - under Ernest Ansermet, no less, and with Nicolai Gedda as Pelléas and a youthful Teresa Stratas as the boy Yniold - was such a triumph. As was the Canteloube *Chants d'Auvergne* and Villa-Lobos Bachianas brasileiras disc (her own favourite of her records) that she made with Stokowski in just a few New York sessions in April 1964. (Both the Canteloube and Villa-Lobos

feature on 'Anna Moffo: The Complete RCA Recital Albums', out this month.) Moffo was bright and smart and a fast learner - virtues that appealed to the big hitters of the day.

Earlier, after her successful Italian debuts on stage (Donizetti's Norina, Spoleto 1955) and screen (Puccini's

> Cio-Cio-San, RAI TV 1956), Walter Legge – sensing the soprano's natural ability to

communicate - put her immediately into starry Columbia recordings

alongside his wife, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf. (In her On and Off the Record: A Memoir of Walter Legge, Schwarzkopf wrote: 'We both have always loved Anna and watched her career with parental pride.') Moffo's bright, young lyric soprano was precision casting in the second half of the 1950s for the soprano Italian Singer in the Sawallisch/Schwarzkopf Capriccio, Susanna in the Giulini Le nozze di Figaro, Nannetta in the Karajan Falstaff and Musetta alongside Callas in La bohème – performances that are still benchmarks in today's catalogues. There was nothing merely supportive (or soubrettish) about

> these appearances, rather each was a natural actor's identification with character and dramatic situation. The flirting of both Musetta and Nannetta felt appropriately young and genuine and neither arch nor exaggerated.

Another of Moffo's evident performing virtues lay in never being swamped by major colleagues. Try one of her loveliest performances, the live Liù conducted by Stokowski from the Metropolitan Opera's 1961 Turandot (a performance always available somewhere but one that has still never been seriously remastered). The sensuality in 'Signore, ascolta' is touching rather than rubbed in, and Moffo's character shines in the memory despite this Turandot's few-holds-barred vocal duel between Birgit Nilsson and Franco Corelli.

DEFINING MOMENTS

•1955 – Debut bears fruit

Debut at Spoleto Festival, Italy. She is snapped up by RAI television to film *Madama Butterfly*, directed by her soon-to-be first husband and manager, Mario Lanfranchi

•1956 – Signed as recording artist

Signed by Walter Legge for a series of Columbia recordings in London and Milan

•1957 - US debut

American debut in Chicago opposite Jussi Björling in La bohème

•1959 – First Met Opera appearance

Metropolitan Opera debut as Violetta in *La traviata* – she goes on to appear at the New York opera house for a total of 17 seasons

•1960s – Roaring success

Repertoire now includes Lucia, Amina, Adina, Pamina, Gilda, Manon, Luisa Miller and the four heroines of *Les contes* d'Hoffmann; makes guest appearances at most major European houses (including Violetta for Walter Felsenstein in Berlin); films and TV in Italy, including The Anna Moffo Show

•1966 – New 'La traviata' created for her

Alfred Lunt's new production of *La traviata* is created especially for Moffo at the new Metropolitan Opera House

•1976 – Returns post-vocal crisis

Returns to performances after a break, with new repertoire including *Thaïs* and *Adriana Lecouvreur*



Or try Moffo's Gilda in a 1963 RCA studio *Rigoletto*, especially in the last act where the jester's daughter, intent on sacrificing herself for her worthless lover, has to continue to make a worthwhile impression of impassioned innocence, with Sparafucile, Maddalena and Solti's interpretation of Verdi's *fortissimo* markings all going at full tilt.

The two roles most associated with Moffo remain

Violetta and Cio-Cio-San, where the characters' youth and vulnerability and the music's mix of the lyric and the technically virtuosic suited her skills well. Her Cio-Cio-San has the right age and impetuosity – the singer once commented that if she didn't sound quite the 15 years asked for in the libretto, she thought she did sound 17 or 18. There is a suitably disturbing fear and awe both in the love duet and when she finally picks up the

THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



Verdi La traviata Rome Opera Chorus and Orchestra / Fernando Previtali Alto (§) (2) ALC2026 (11/61^R)

fatal dagger. The conducting on this, her most easily available recording is less idiomatic than some of the 'live' Italian performances (including the film), but it's good that it was recorded when it was in 1957. The RCA studio recording of *La traviata* – again, made early in Moffo's career (1960) – has become an unjustly forgotten set. It's extremely 'live' from Moffo – there's a little too much sobbing alongside the

well-judged coughing – but its portrait of an angry, unjustly sidelined younger woman is intriguingly distinct from the more *grande dame* portraits to which we've become accustomed. Her ability to convey the role dramatically is complete and natural, a virtue shared by all her records, not excluding an exceptionally moving Mad Scene from *Lucia di Lammermoor* and the excerpts from numerous operettas. **6**

Instrumental



Philip Clark listens to a set of Ferneyhough's works for piano:

'When it was premiered, all talk was of Ferneyhough composing a piece that involved knock-knock jokes' ▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 65



Harriet Smith listens to a pair of new Mendelssohn surveys:

'Mendelssohn's Songs Without Words, as these two new complete recordings remind us, are a veritable treasure trove' > REVIEW ON PAGE 67

JS Bach

Goldberg Variations, BWV988

Alexandre Tharaud pf

Erato (€) 2564 60517-7; (€) (€) 2564 60491-4 (75' • DDD)

CD includes bonus DVD, 'Alexandre Tharaud plays the Goldberg Variations'



'You've got to learn your instrument. Then, you practise, practise, practise.

And then, when you finally get up there on the bandstand, forget all that and just wail.' Those words, or others to that effect, have been ascribed to jazz legend Charlie Parker, and they easily apply to Alexandre Tharaud's Bach. While the pianist has obviously scrutinised the *Goldberg Variations* with a fine-tooth comb, he basically hangs loose and flies free, letting detailed niceties fall into place without sounding the least bit studied or calibrated. It's a performance, not a lecture.

The opening Aria is on the slow side (dragging? Never!), but the first five variations sprint from the starting gate, buoyed by perky left-hand accents. If Var 5 doesn't quite sustain its opening pace, other cross-handed numbers such as Vars 14, 20 and 23 fuse a light harpsichord touch with unabashed pianistic bravura. Note, too, Var 7's inflected embellishments, the woodwind-like left-hand articulation in the Fughetta Var 10, the pianist's flexible, vocally oriented phrasing of Var 13's long cantabile lines and his gorgeously tinted three-part texture throughout Var 15.

In contrast to interpretations that seek unity and continuity through rigorously considered tempo relationships (Glenn Gould's 1981 remake, for example), Tharaud apparently aims to reveal each variation's individual character. You especially hear this via Var 29's flurries of notes, abetted by appropriately grandiose octave reinforcements, and in the Frenchoverture Var 16's unorthodox elongation of the opening chord. For the record,

Tharaud observes each and every repeat. In short, his fresh voice and genuine musicality warrant placement in the vast *Goldberg Variations* discography's top tier. Jed Distler

JS Bach

'Praeludien & Fugen'

Preludes - BWV870a, 895, 900, 901, 902, 902a, 923, 924, 926, 933, 935, 938, 942, 943 & 999. Fugues - BWV870a, 895, 899, 900, 902, 946, 947, 948, 951, 952, 953, 956, 957 & 961

Rinaldo Alessandrini hpd Naïve © OP30564 (71' • DDD)



This unusual disc takes as its starting point those succinct keyboard pieces,

both stand-alone and developed later in collections (notably *The Well-Tempered Clavier*), that Bach used as material for teaching, mostly in Cöthen. Modestly shunning any claims of scholarship, Rinaldo Alessandrini has in fact assembled an ingenious miscellany – a compendium often coupling same-key preludes and fugues never previously 'attached', but following a practice more common than one might imagine.

The principal pleasure of this 'divertissement' is how a simple conceit is eloquently identified in Alessandrini's logical and attractive readings. Since the majority of these pieces are not highly wrought contrapuntal essays, the effect is often a sunny journey through Bach's early melodic proofs and cathartic figuration, exquisitely caressed for example in the conjoined BWV924 and 946, the latter on a sturdy Albinoni theme Bach had doubtless picked up from someone else's travels. The Prelude of BWV902, conceived on a motif reminiscent of François Couperin's opening of the Messe pour les couvents, is a rare but wonderfully satisfying concert piece, and so too those odd sketches of uncertain authorship refashioned by Alessandrini with stylistic astuteness.

Above all this recital celebrates the 'inventio' in Bach's music, the prime idea from which all else flows, which inspired music so astonishingly apt for pedagogical purposes without, for a moment, disregarding the potential for delectation and meaning for the 'idle' listener. A thoughtful volume of Bach vignettes, sensitively mined and performed with devotion. Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

JS Bach

Six Solo Cello Suites, BWV1007-1012

Matt Haimovitz VC

Pentatone Originale © ② ______ PTC5186 555
(135' • DDD/DSD)



The reverence with which some cellists choose to treat Bach's Cello Suites can

produce results that disappear in opposite directions: some are simply rendered insipid, while others disregard accepted forms of performance with a belligerence that can place an equally frustrating barrier between listener and performer. Although Matt Haimovitz stops far short of that latter self-indulgence, his second recording of the Suites is not one for the fainthearted. There are spontaneity and unpredictability in both the tempi and rubato of the entirety of the first three Suites – in particular the Preludes of the First and Third - which rob them of any sense of direction to the extent of romanticising Bach's clean counterpoint to a degree that some might find cloying.

The tides begin to turn with the palatecleansing Fourth Suite, however. The tension built up in the first three Suites should be released at this point, and in this performance there is far more of a sense of the dance element that should inform all the Suites but which is particularly important here. Haimovitz brings a beguiling lightness to the line that propels the listener from the sunny serenity of the Prelude to the *moto perpetuo* of the final



A fine performer and an historically informed craftsman: Colin Booth plays music by Louis Couperin on a Celini Harpsichord he restored himself (review on page 65)

Gigue, despite the deceptively complicated harmonic structure of that Suite as a whole. This, in turn, allows the almost preternatural control he displays in the Sarabande of the Fifth Suite to unravel it with all the desolation of a melodic line that has no hint of that previous complexity, and create the impact it should – as a profound statement of emotional isolation.

Despite the excessive mannerism of the first three Suites, this collection achieves a genuine elegance that, although hard-won, is worth the investment. Those seeking beauty for beauty's sake may want to look elsewhere (to Philip Higham's simple and direct version, for instance, or the superlative reading by David Watkin, both of 2015), but those who want to be challenged without compromising tone or tuning, both of which are impeccable here, should look no further. Caroline Gill

Chopin

Preludes - Op 28; Op 45; Op *posth* **Yundi** *pf*DG/Mercury (© 481 1910DH (39' • DDD)

Chopin

Preludes, Op 28. Variations brillantes, Op 12. Berceuse, Op 57. Barcarolle, Op 60 **Dong Hyek Lim** pf

Warner Classics © 2564 60688-8 (61' • DDD)





Comparisons may be invidious, but they seem inescapable for two new sets of Chopin Preludes by Dong-Hyek Lim and Yundi. At 33, Yundi is much the better known and more recorded, while the 31-year-old Lim is a relative newcomer. Their two recordings provide a glimpse of contemporary Chopin interpretation in microcosm.

Yundi's Preludes are vividly contrasted and convey an exhilarating sweep. One can imagine, for instance, that several successive pieces were captured in a single take, without pause. The bubbling, insouciantly rhythmical No 5 (D major) is followed by a satisfyingly subdued No 6 (B minor). The barcarolle-like No 13 (F sharp major) is pleasantly lyrical. No 16 (B flat minor), on the other hand, impresses more as a technical feat than as an expressive study, while an agitated No 22 (G minor) devolves into a rage so over-pedalled that the musical contours blur. The overall impression is of long-fixed interpretations that, in their indebtedness to received wisdom, never fail to dutifully demonstrate the obvious.

If Yundi's readings are short on poetry, that is precisely the quality that Lim's performances offer in abundance. His approach might best be described as close reading: Chopin's markings are observed to the letter, including impeccable phrasing that lives and breathes. Unrushed tempi and sparse pedalling reveal a wealth of detail. Rhetorically, Lim does not hesitate to separate the hands for expressive emphasis and an extraordinarily wide dynamic spectrum imbues his cantabile playing with rare eloquence. Hypersensitivity to the harmonies of the gloomy No 2 (A minor) describe a contour that ultimately collapses in defeat. The tiny No 7 (A major) is a gem of understated plenitude. Lim's inerrant sense of pacing is particularly evident in the 'Raindrop' Prelude, No 15 (D flat), where the relentless A flat becomes the signal pulse of psychological terror before subsiding, and No 16 (B flat minor) has the searing intensity of a mind unhinged. A noble cantabile wafts over the spacious No 17 (A flat major), with a hushed sotto voce section creating magical contrast. The impassioned No 24 (D minor) is free of laborious brute force, deriving its power from the insistent melodic declamatory arc above textures of utmost clarity.



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A youthfully fresh set of Variations on 'Je vends des scapulaires', a Barcarolle that ardently sings over calm waters reflecting the exquisite play of light between sun and sky, and an effortless, gossamer Berceuse, among the most beautiful I've heard, round out this splendid recording. But Lim's Preludes alone are worth the purchase price. They speak from the heart, comparing favourably with such recent interpretations as Trifonov's (DG, 12/13) and sitting alongside classic accounts by Argerich, Rubinstein and Cortot without apology. Patrick Rucker

L Couperin

Pieces – in D; in C minor; in A; in F Colin Booth hpd

Fugue State/Soundboard ® FSRCD008/SBCD215 (79' • DDD)



This disc is as interesting for the instrument as for Louis Couperin's

music. Colin Booth, exceptionally, is both a fine performer and an historically informed craftsman. He acquired the two-manual 1661 French-Italian Nicholas Celini harpsichord in 2012, restored it and then – inspired by its remarkably 'long sustain' – chose to record (on his own Soundboard label) pieces by Couperin.

The instrument, built in Narbonne, when tuned to 17th-century French pitch produces an exceptionally resonant sound, especially considering there is no keyboard coupler: the bass is strong and clear, and Booth's timely use of the 4ft stop on the upper manual is enchanting. Many recordings of this repertoire have been made on 18th-century French instruments or modern copies. The Celini is a rare survivor from the composer's own era.

Couperin's music for harpsichord – some 127 pieces – survives in only two posthumous 17th-century manuscripts. From it Booth has chosen 30 examples, grouped mainly by key, including five unmeasured preludes (the expressive genre for which Couperin is best remembered). In these – the A major in particular – Booth the performer never disappoints: his interpretations are at once poetic, luxuriant and emotionally compelling. This recording also serves to remind us what a worthy precursor to his nephew François he was.

Booth treats us to a fascinating musical experience. For me, the instrument, music, performer and recording merge most sublimely in the *Chaconne la Complaignante*.

Julie Anne Sadie

Ferneyhough

'Complete Piano Works'
Lemma-Icon-Epigram. Quirl. Opus Contra
Naturam. Invention. Epigrams. Three Pieces.
Sonata for Two Pianos^a

Nicolas Hodges, aRolf Hind pfs Neos (£) (2) NEOS11501/2 (98' • DDD)



Nicolas Hodges stares into the middle distance, his fingers perched over the

keyboard, his pupils fully dilated: cover art that strikes a pose like a rabbit caught in headlights. And well it might. Brian Ferneyhough's piano music throws up technical challenges that are, famously, in a class all of their own. Rhythmic intricacy is his calling card. The buzz-phrase 'New Complexity' hangs around like the ghost of genres past. But the real challenge Hodges faces – with technical chops aplenty – is that of scooping out musical meaning from behind the notes.

This set rounds up music composed between 1965 and 2013. Ferneyhough terms the earliest pieces documented here - *Invention* (1965), *Epigrams* (1966), Three Pieces for piano (1966-67) and Sonata for two pianos (1966) - as 'autodidactic projects', works that were intentionally designed to frame, and then solve, specific issues of compositional technique and musical form. The sound world they inhabit, rooted explicitly in Webern, Boulez and Stockhausen, tells you everything you could need to know about why this composer needed to exile himself from the UK, even if the pieces themselves can remain frustratingly unvielding.

The compositional itches Ferneyhough scratches are intellectually stimulating, and there was a time in my life when I relished taking these scores apart analytically, tracing lines of congruence between pitch and form – but I'm not convinced that Hodges makes a particularly watertight case for how this music operates in terms of sound.

Lemma-Icon-Epigram (1981) represents Ferneyhough and the piano coming of age, but Hodges's icy formality lacks the spaciousness and differentiation of line that both Ian Pace (NMC) and Marino Formenti (Col Legno) bring to their respective recordings. Opus Contra Naturam (2000) for speaking pianist originally functioned as a scene in Ferneyhough's Walter Benjamin-inspired opera Shadowtime. When it was premiered, all talk on the avant-garde grapevine spoke of Ferneyhough composing a piece that involved knock-knock jokes.

And they're genuinely amusing! The pianist is cast as a Liberace-meets-Richard Clayderman glitzy nightclub pianist who taunts Benjamin as he descends towards the Underworld. Hodges's poker-face delivery adds a narrative. Moreover, the sound of his voice as it lends sonic contrast to Ferneyhough's piano-writing highlights inbuilt problems elsewhere – synthetic atonality dropped on the synthetic temperament of a grand piano, in this case, gives a curiously anaemic brew. Philip Clark

Janáček · Scriabin

Janáček Piano Sonata '1.X.1905, From the Street'. On an Overgrown Path, Book 1
Scriabin Piano Sonatas - No 4, Op 30; No 5, Op 53. Poème, Op 32 No 1. Vers la flamme, Op 72
Stephen Hough pf

Hyperion (F) CDA67895 (73' • DDD)



Stephen Hough's piano-playing always seems informed by a composer's instincts

and sensibilities, attributes immediately discernible in his new recording combining Scriabin with two major works of Janáček, a composer 18 years Scriabin's senior, yet who outlived him by 13.

Out of this richly atmospheric performance of Book 1 of On an Overgrown Path, certain pieces emerge as almost cinematically graphic. One easily pictures eddies of autumn winds in 'A blown-away leaf' or hears the voices of children in 'Come with us!'. The raw emotions of 'Unutterable anguish!' and the apprehension verging on fear of 'The barn owl has not flown away' are immediate and powerful. Within the scant 12 minutes of the Sonata 1.X.1905, a psychological drama of tragic import unfolds on what seems like an epic scale. The emotional nakedness and loving attention to detail recall the seminal Janáček recordings of Rudolf Firkušný.

The same probing, questing intelligence is brought to bear on the more conventionally virtuoso music of Scriabin. To music that all too often leaves one rudderless and gasping for air in wave after wave of opulently ambivalent harmony, Hough brings orientation and direction without sacrificing sensuality or mystical aura. He accomplishes this through an almost uncanny variety of touch, tone production and judicious pedalling. The result is a Fifth Sonata that, despite its audacious originality, suddenly seems not quite so distant from contemporaneous Debussy and Ravel. The irrepressible nervous energy animating the fast sections becomes, in the finale of the

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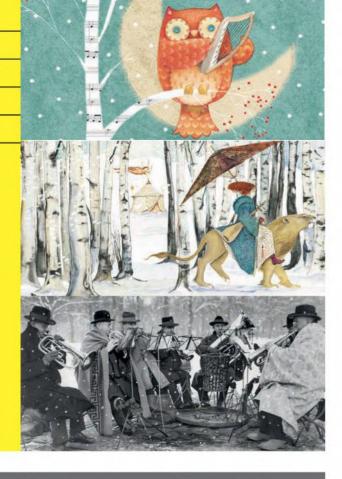
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Fourth Sonata, both the means and the end. In lesser hands, Scriabin's obsessive repetition of massive chords can seem like insensate piano abuse. Through shaping and dynamic gradation, Hough restores these characteristic figurations to their original shimmering vibrando effect, producing a sound at once musical and thrilling. Shape and direction are the operatives in Vers la flamme, creating an impact unlike any other recording I know.

Listening to dozens of new piano recordings each year, a sort of private rating system inevitably develops. For me, discs warranting the highest praise are those that persuasively introduce new music, that chart new interpretative territory for a work or that demonstrate something fresh and heretofore unrecognised in music long familiar. These are recordings that contribute significantly to common understanding and appreciation. Hough's contribution in this release could scarcely be more generous. Patrick Rucker

Mendelssohn

Fanny Mendelssohn Songs Without Words -Op 2; Op 6; Op 8. Pastorella Mendelssohn **Complete Songs Without Words** Matthias Kirschnereit of

Berlin Classics (M) (3) 0300639BC (3h 10' • DDD)

Mendelssohn

Complete Songs Without Words Michael Endres pf Oehms (F) (2) OC452 (118' • DDD)





Mendelssohn's Songs Without Words may have suffered from their association with the Victorian parlour (just as his oratorios became indelibly linked with the amateur choral tradition) but, as these two new complete recordings remind us, they are a veritable treasure trove. Two German pianists, born a year apart, present quite different readings, with Matthias Kirschnereit offering a bonus in the form of a disc of Fanny Mendelssohn's own 'songs' for piano.

As countless pianists down the ages have proved, the Songs Without Words respond best to a non-sentimental approach, as witness artists as different temperamentally as Barenboim, Perahia and Perianes. If one were to generalise, Michael Endres is the more outgoing of the two, Kirschnereit more eager to internalise. Yet the latter is more of a colourist than Endres: in the

third of Op 19, for example, with its hunting-horn calls and bounding energy, Endres sounds relatively monotone. But neither fully captures the half-lights of the mournful Op 19 No 6, so achingly conveyed by Perianes.

In the opening number (marked Andante espressivo) of the second book, Op 30, both new versions are faster than the soulfully slow Barenboim. Yet what's striking is that the Argentinian never sounds too slow, thanks to his finely tuned voicings, alongside which the desynchronised Kirschnereit seems somewhat gauche. In the elfin Op 30 No 2, again it is Barenboim who bewitches. On the other hand, it is Perianes who seduces in the F sharp minor 'Gondolier Song' that closes the set, Endres sounding deliberate by comparison. However, there are times when Perianes can sound a touch fey - in the 'Gondolier Song', Op 62 No 5, for instance, where both Endres and Kirschnereit find a great directness of utterance.

The fourth book, Op 53, is particularly delectable and Kirschnereit responds eagerly to the Presto agitato marking of the third number; Endres, while full of energy, is a little coarser in execution. And in the penultimate number of the set, Barenboim catches well its agitation, alongside which Endres seems a tad portentous. In the famous 'Spinnerlied' of Op 67, always a good testing ground, Endres comes across as a touch hard-edged in his left hand, but then Kirschnereit simply sounds too careful. Put on Rachmaninov, though, and all bets are off (I marginally prefer the clarity of the 1920 version over that of 1928, both available in his box of complete recordings - RCA).

Though it will be clear that I have reservations about both sets, Kirschnereit's addition of a disc of Fanny Mendelssohn is an enticing prospect. As the 19th-century critic Henry F Chorley pointed out, had she been 'a poor man's daughter, she would have been known throughout the world, alongside Frau Schumann and Madame Pleyel, as a female pianist of the highest order'. And highly regarded as a composer too. But Kirschnereit tends to underplay their drama (in the churning second number of Op 2, for instance), and the effect overall is emotionally tepid. While he's elegant in the first of Op 6, the climax of the second piece could have had more impact, while Op 8 No 2's adventurous harmonic language passes for relatively little. The field is still wide open for a really first-rate recording of these piano pieces. Harriet Smith Songs Without Words - selected comparisons: Barenboim (12/74^R, 8/80^R) (DG) 453 061-2GTA2

Perahia (3/00) (SONY) SK66511 Perianes (12/14) (HARM) HMC90 2195

Ravel

Gaspard de la nuit. Jeux d'eau. Sonatine. Pavane pour une infante défunte. A la manière de Alexander Borodine. A la manière de Emmanuel Chabrier Stefan Vladar of Capriccio (F) C5260 (49' • DDD)



Recalling in particular Stefan Vladar's fine early recording of Beethoven's Diabelli

Variations (Sony, 4/92), I turned to the radically different world of his Ravel with special interest. Yet Gaspard, the centrepiece of this recital, is too generalised to engage fully with the work's macabre and hallucinatory world. Is the opening of 'Ondine' sufficiently ppp to create the necessary sense of seductiveness? The end may be truly rapide et brillant but there is too little dynamic and tonal finesse to evoke Ravel's chilling inspiration. Vladar captures much of its slow and remorseless progression of 'Le gibet', but 'Scarbo', taken at a wild and furious pace, lacks a range extending from a whispering pianissimo to a blazing fortissimo.

Feux d'eau, too, lacks an elegance inseparable from its scintillating play of light and shade, and in the Sonatine there are hints of instability injurious to its cool and inscrutable charm. There is more feeling for that tendresse that lies below the surface of the Pavane, but the two parodies on Borodin and Chabrier are more heavyhanded than fleet and stylish. Sadly, there is little competition here for the Gaspards of Pogorelich. Thibaudet and Argerich (whose 'Ondine', on her live EMI recital -2/01 - was suitably described as 'like white-water rafting'). Bryce Morrison

Reubke

Piano Sonata. Sonata on the 94th Psalm. Adagio Julius Becker of

Hyperion (F) CDA68119 (59' • DDD)



Julius Reubke was a remarkable talent whose life was cut tragically sort: he died

in 1858 aged just 24. The work by which he is best known, the Sonata on the 94th Psalm, one of the organ's masterworks, and the no less impressive Piano Sonata in B flat minor, make you wonder what he would have achieved had he been spared. The Piano Sonata was completed a year before his death and dedicated to 'his

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Powerful and lucid: the Armenian pianist Varduhi Yeritsyan has recorded the complete Scriabin sonatas for Paraty (review on page 70)

revered master, Franz Liszt', with whom he had begun studies in 1853, the very year in which Liszt's own monumental B minor Sonata was completed. Reubke, clearly, was an attentive and appreciative student, for his Sonata is overtly modelled on Liszt's, a single-movement structure lasting nearly half an hour in three distinct sections linked by recurring motifs. There are even quotes from Liszt's Sonata, a quasi-recitative in Liszt's favourite 'spiritual' key of F sharp major, and page after page of cruelly taxing writing. But for all these superficial similarities, this is a powerful work of great individuality and distinction, and is here given a suitably masterful and breathtaking performance by Markus Becker.

Claudius Tanski recorded the Piano Sonata back in 1988 (MDG, 11/89) on an outstanding disc which coupled it with Martin Sander at the Klais organ in Altenberger Dom playing the Organ Sonata. Becker has unearthed a piano version by the prolific transcriber August Stradal (1860-1930). Whereas one can easily imagine the Piano Sonata arranged for organ, one wonders initially how the piano can possibly emulate the Sonata on the 94th Psalm, a work which relies so heavily for its raison d'être on the organ's innate characteristics. But if you

can rid yourself temporarily of the aural memory of the original, Stradal's ingenuity, except in the long held phrases at the end of the Adagio, makes it a completely convincing piano work. The finale, which is so thrilling on a symphonic organ, is no less aweinspiring in Becker's hands. Those who like their Romantic bravura piano with added stamina will find this release, recorded by Ben Connellan and Jeremy Hayes at Potton Hall, a rewarding experience.

Jeremy Nicholas

'Satiesfictions'





'Promenades with Erik Satie' A film by Anne-Kathrin Peitz and Youlian Tabakov Accentus (F) ACC20312 (56' + 15' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM stereo • O • S)



Befitting its extraordinary subject, Anne-Kathrin Peitz and Youlian Tabakov's brilliant film about the

French composer and hardline agent provocateur Erik Satie aims at more than a standard life-and-works biography. Satie, the film reminds us, preferred to walk in the rain, but would go to extreme lengths to avoid his precious umbrella getting wet.

Peitz and Tabakov's film similarly slants at logic by consciously breaking the fourth wall.

One leitmotif - sorry Erik, that's too Wagner; let's settle for 'idée fixe' instead underpinning the film is a silhouette of Satie's own magnificent facial hair that detaches itself from a cartoon image of his body, and, in animated moves that Terry Gilliam would be proud to call his own, transforms into note-heads which swim along staves like fish. Satie liked to fill his time by drawing faux adverts that 'sold' everything from ships to spacecraft. And Satisfictions is liberally littered with comparable whimsy. A man in hospital is brought a medicine tray. The lid is lifted to reveal a revolving LP of Satie's music, which miraculously cures the patient.

But underlying these verbal, musical and visual puns is a sincere attempt to crack the enigma of Satie. From the archives comes footage of Man Ray, Jean Cocteau, Virgil Thomson, Georges Auric and other primary sources who all testify to Satie's oddly inverse charisma; here was someone whose personality could fill a room – but only once he'd left it. The deeper you got to know Satie, the further his distance became. The film portrays the acute pain of actually being Erik Satie - that single catastrophic love affair, the loneliness, the

boredom, the desperation of what to do when he wasn't composing.

Today, Satie would probably have been diagnosed as being on some spectrum or other. But Peitz and Tabakov are interested in how his inner life knocked back on the music. Satie authority Jean-Pierre Armengaud compares the composer's structures to tweets - contained bursts of compacted reality released into a virtual reality. Henri Sauguet describes how Satie was gloriously unafraid of banal gestures better a legitimately banal gesture than a grand gesture gone wrong. When, at the age of 55, Satie finally got the commission for Parade and was lifted out of poverty, he spent all the cash on taking his friends for dinner – squandering money that might have made his everyday life more tolerable on friends in whose presence he often felt uncomfortable. In loneliness and hardship, Satie found comfort. Philip Clark

Scriabin

'The Complete Piano Sonatas' **Varduhi Yeritsyan** pf
Paraty (£) (2) PARATY915136 (129' • DDD)



Young Armenian pianist Varduhi Yeritsyan is a more than eloquent advocate

for Scriabin, powerful and lucid even in the composer's more hallucinatory and narcotic writing. Offering the complete sonatas in a mixed rather than chronological sequence, she stresses the abrupt changes from the Chopin-inspired (though already indelibly Russian) early sonatas, through the wildly ricocheting rhythms of the middle period to Scriabin's final and rarefied ideal. She is on the best of terms with instructions such as *Pépouvemente surgit* ('the frightening rises up') or *accarezzevole* ('caressingly'), and excels in the First Sonata's demonic galop and in the Fifth Sonata's alternation of volatility and sultry meandering.

In the Second Sonata (inspired by Scriabin's first view of the Baltic Sea), she is no match for Pogorelich's phenomenally articulate whirl through the finale, and she is less *prestissimo* and *volando* than either Ashkenazy or Hamelin in the Fourth Sonata's dizzying conclusion. Again, Horowitz's incandescent sense of Romantic polyphony in the Ninth and Tenth Sonatas remains unique. But if Yeritsyan offers a less vital or compulsive experience and, in the final resort, is less empathetic than Ashkenazy in his complete cycle, there is no questioning the exceptional command of her finely recorded performances. **Bryce Morrison**

Ivan Moravec

'Twelfth Night Recital'

JS Bach Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue, BWV903 Beethoven Piano Sonata No 14, 'Moonlight', Op 27 No 2 Chopin Ballade No 4, Op 52. Mazurkas - No 32, Op 50 No 3; No 41, Op 63 No 3. Nocturnes - No 5, Op 15 No 2; No 8, Op 27 No 2 Debussy Suite bergamasque - Clair de lune Mozart Piano Sonata No 13, K333 Ivan Moravec pf

Supraphon © ② SU4190-2 (91' • DDD) Recorded live, Prague 1987



This set was to have been a birthday present for the great Czech pianist Ivan Moravec,

who would have been 85 on November 7. But alas it became a posthumous tribute following his death in July. The fact that it has appeared at all is down to the efforts of Supraphon's executive producer Matouš Vlčinský. As he relates in the booklet, for 28 years the recital lay unissued in the Supraphon archive. Moravec, ever selfcritical, initially rejected the idea of it being issued. Finally he was won over, and was listening to it the night before his death on July 27. Vlčinský writes: 'This recording remains behind as his message, his statement on beauty. He surely will be glad if, perhaps while listening to it, you drink a glass of fine wine to his health, to his honour, to the beauty of music.'

No wine is required to appreciate the quality of the recital. To listen to Moravec is to be reminded of another era, one in which there was no political correctness surrounding Bach and the modern piano. He gives a warm, richly rhetorical reading of the Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue, one that is seemingly without ego and entirely compelling. The Mozart sonata is another highlight: Moravec was of course a supreme interpeter of his music and this reading of K333 is a gem. It speaks of long acquaintance in the way the music is allowed to unfold so artlessly. The piquant modulations of the slow movement are just so, given enough prominence but never too much, while the burbling finale is simply joyous. If I have qualms about the rhythmic freedom of the first movement of the Moonlight, they are offset by a lolloping Allegretto in which Moravec finds such airiness of texture that it never sounds too slow, and a fearlessly impulsive finale.

Moravec's Chopin is always special and even in a piece as familiar as the Op 27 No 2 Nocturne it is rendered fresh by the myriad shadings and colourings combined with an ear for Chopin's inner lines. The Op 15 No 2 Nocturne, so often over-sweetened, here has a meditative quality, and even in the turbulent inner section the piece's fundamental solemnity is never overshadowed. The Fourth Ballade is another highlight, the pianist repeatedly drawing out lines previously hidden. It's a spacious view of the piece, Moravec allowing the detail to tell without losing sense of the piece's architecture. The encores are similiarly captivating, whether in the inner voicings drawn out of the Op 63 No 3 Mazurka or in his enraptured 'Clair de lune', rapturously received. A fitting tribute to a great artist. Harriet Smith

'Four Hands'

Bolcom Graceful Ghost Rag
Brahms Liebeslieder Waltzes, Op 52a
Ravel La valse Schubert Fantasie, D940
Leon Fleisher, Katherine Jacobson pf
Sony Classical ® 88875 06416-2 (62' • DDD)



The husband-and-wife duo of Leon Fleisher and Katherine Jacobson commence this one

piano/four hand programme with Brahms's singerless edition of his Liebeslieder Waltzes Book 1. One hardly misses the vocal component, since Fleisher and Jacobson truly sing at the keyboard. What genial phrasing, supple balances and effortless ensemble unanimity they achieve, and without getting overly loud when textures become thick, as even the most experienced duet practitioners tend to do. The little tenutos in 'O die Frauen' suggest that the pianists might be mouthing the text as they play (leaning on the first syllable of 'Frauen'), and the often turgid 'Die grüne Hopfenranke' transpires lightly. The muted delicacy of 'Nachtigall, sie singt so schön' may be worth the price of the entire release.

Within the Schubert F minor Fantasie's straightforward parameters lie discreet smidgens of rubato and an avoidance of foursquare accentuation, even if this account doesn't quite match the tonal allure of the classic Perahia/Lupu recording. By contrast, the duo's clear and conscientious rendition of Ravel's La valse lacks the sweep and giddy abandon one hears from the best two piano (Argerich/Freire) and solo piano (Muraro) versions. However, the performance catches fire in the final peroration. While William Bolcom's Graceful Ghost Rag gains little in translation from its original two-hand incarnation to the duet medium, Fleisher and Jacobson phrase the gentle loping dotted rhythms with idiomatic simplicity and grace. Buy this for the Brahms. Jed Distler

70 GRAMOPHONE NOVEMBER 2015

GRAMOPHONE Collector ORGANS OF FNGLAND

Jeremy Nicholas sets off down some unexplored byways of British repertoire with a handful discs from Priory and Regent



The organ of York Minster, where Thomas Tertius Noble was organist at the turn of the 20th century

homas Tertius Noble (1867-1953) was organist of York Minster from 1897 to 1913 and is remembered today, if at all, for his choral rather than organ music. From the organspecialist label Priory comes the first of three volumes of his complete works played by John Scott Whiteley, himself organist of the Minster from 1975 to 2010 and now Organist Emeritus. Whiteley is the ideal champion of his predecessor's music, even if all but one of the 19 works here were composed after Noble left York for New York and are played on an instrument that has seen many additions since Noble's day. The majority of the pieces, eight of which are preludes on well-known hymn tunes, are of the solid, workmanlike kind that rolled off the late-19th-century production line without a readily discernible individual voice. The most impressive work here is also the longest (16'22"), the 1932 Introduction and Passacaglia, but otherwise Noble emerges as a worthy candidate for inclusion on another intriguing disc from Priory.

This is 'Green and Pleasant Land', featuring the indefatigable **Kevin Bowyer**, without doubt the most prolific and probably the most underrated organist on the international circuit today. The tracklisting of 18 short works gives little away – Cantilena in A flat, Toccata, Nocturne, *Marche funèbre* – and the names of the composers, equally, will not ignite a flame

of recognition. All are British, born between 1849 and 1885, and all second- or third-rate. Don't let that put you off. There are many strikingly effective pieces of music written by second- and third-rate composers as long as you are willing to search among a lot of rubbish to find the gems. Bowyer found all these in a set of volumes of The Organ Loft, a monthly periodical of organ music that ran from 1900 to 1915. Having been reading much about the First World War (the disc was recorded in August 2014), he realised that much of this music would have been played by the many young musicians who ended up fighting in the trenches. The 1904 Norman & Beard organ in Woburn Parish Church (it stands at the entrance to the park of Woburn Abbey) is the ideal instrument for this repertoire, and if you cherry-pick the contents, there is much to enjoy: Frank Heddon Bond's Chorus in E flat, for example, or Ernest Halsey's Toccata in C minor. You will have your own favourites.

Holst, from exactly the same generation of composers, composed his masterpiece between 1914 and 1916, though was at pains to dissociate any part of *The Planets* from the conflict of the Great War ('I had the scheme...roughly worked out in my mind by Easter 1914, except Mercury, which was added later,' he wrote). The organ of St Paul's Cathedral is notoriously difficult to record, so hats off to Paul Crichton for effectively taming the beast in

Simon Johnson's sonic spectacular as he journeys from Mars to Neptune. Peter Sykes's transcription is extraordinarily vivid and convincing. It's followed by Johnson's own organ version of, appropriately enough, Holst's *St Paul's Suite*. Impressive technique, colouring and characterisation.

More music from St Paul's, but space confines me to only a brief mention of **Timothy Wakerel**'s stylish and crisply executed recital on the new (2012) Drake Organ in the OBE Chapel of the Cathedral. Works by Buxtehude, Bull, Böhm, JS Bach (the Toccata and Fugue in F, BWV540), CPE Bach, Gade, Brahms and Saint-Saëns.

To complete this round-up we return to another disc of all-English composers, an imaginative celebration on the Regent label of the 150th anniversary of the birth in 1865 of the blind organist and composer Alfred Hollins. That year also saw the birth of his lifelong friend William Wolstenholme (who, too, was blind) and – the most famous of the three - Edwin Lemare. All have works both by and dedicated to them on 'Alfred Hollins and Friends', played on the 72 ranks and 4945 pipes of the Organ of Third Baptist Church, Saint Louis, Missouri, by the British organist **Simon** Niemiński (incidentally a former organ scholar of York Minster). The repertoire is a bran tub of discoveries, some more worthy of revival than others, but includes the same catchy Chorus in E flat by Bond (another of Hollins's friends) espoused by Bowyer. The two recordings illustrate the difference between the aural aesthetic of the two labels. Regent trades bright colours and exemplary clarity for a surprisingly lifeless acoustic; Priory gives you the empty church at the expense of some loss of definition but with the unassailable advantage in this repertoire of using English organs. @

THE RECORDINGS



Noble Complete Org Wks, Vol 1
John Scott Whiteley
Priory ® PRCD1116



Various Cpsrs 'Green and Pleasant Land' **Kevin Bowyer** Priory (P PRCD1131



Holst Planets. St Paul's Suite Simon Johnson Priory ® PRCD1144



Various Cpsrs 'The St Paul's Gem' Timothy Wakerell Priory
PRCD1130



Hollins et al 'Alfred Hollins & Friends' Simon Niemiński Regent ® REGCD473

Aulis Sallinen

Andrew Mellor salutes the Finnish composer, recently turned 80, who discovered a wholly distinctive voice and ignited the country's opera boom

he writing, so to speak, was on the wall. A young arts administrator was travelling with his orchestra in Cologne in 1962 when a man was shot at the Berlin Wall by East German border guards. Saddened and furious, the administrator wrote a 10-minute orchestral work for which he reached for the nearest utilitarian title: *Mauermusik* ('Wall Music'). When asked about the resulting piece, the administrator didn't hold back. 'It is an orchestral elegy to the insane circumstances which allow human beings to be officially killed at the very heart of European culture,' he said. 'It is an elegy to the cries of a dying youth which ring out from the Berlin Wall to a world calling itself civilised.'

The administrator was Aulis Sallinen, two years into a 10-year stint in the back room of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, but well into the stride of those simple, plain-speaking convictions that would characterise his outlook and his music for the next 50 years (and still do). You hear Sallinen and immediately the idealistic bunfight of 20th-century music fades away. You hear Sallinen and you know, somehow, that the music just *is* – however different it might seem from his last piece you heard, however surprising or spare, lyrical or

'I turn on the radio, listen to the music that comes out, and it takes quite a while before I realise that the music is my own'

mechanical. You hear Sallinen and, more often than not, you're locked in – ensnared by a musical hook much the same way as you are from the first 'da da da daaaa' of Beethoven's Fifth.

Mauermusik came at a critical time for the composer, who was born in 1935 on the shores of Lake Ladoga, the district of Karelia lost by Finland to the Soviet Union less than a decade later. It was the score that brought him to international attention and probably sounded the death knell for his desk job at the orchestra - and it was Helsinki's 'other' symphony orchestra, the Philharmonic, which gave its first performance in 1964, under Ulf Söderblom. But Mauermusik also arrived just as a handful of Finnish composers – Rautavaara, Kokkonen, Marttinen - were turning back to tonality with an unbridled sense of joy and excitement. Some claim the piece signals the more simple, personal, emotional style on which Sallinen would build his career; others describe it as the culmination of his short-lived modernist phase. In truth you can hear both: the immediate 'hook' of the searching, stuttering opening idea built on a single note; and the surrounding musical fog formed of ambiguous, modernist harmonies that would soon dissipate in Sallinen's scores altogether.



In 1970, Sallinen quit his admin job and started to compose full-time. As a parting gesture, the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra commissioned a symphony from its former employee for the opening of Alvar Aalto's new Finlandia Hall in Helsinki in 1971. Before that, the orchestra's Chief Conductor Paavo Berglund had ordered another orchestral work from Sallinen, advising him to write for wind, brass and percussion and avoid strings (clearly Berglund already had an idea about Finlandia Hall's problematic acoustics). The composer duly delivered Chorali (1970) taking Berglund's advice; one critic wrote of the 'thin string tone' when he heard the symphony broadcast on the radio. As Sallinen recalled in 2004 when CPO launched a new recorded cycle of his orchestral works, 'Building blocks are grouped together in different ways in Chorali: in succession, interlocked, superimposed...and they create counterpoint in the listener's memory...Might this have been the start of the mosaic technique that I used later?'

Perhaps. And as with the very best musical craftsmen, Sallinen's priorities remained thus – music built of minimal, often simple means viewed with endless potential. He has compared his use of 'motif centres' with throwing a stone into water: 'Rings form and spread out; thus the stone influences everything that surrounds it.' As his colleague Kalevi Aho



SALLINEN FACTS

Born April 9, 1935 **Education** Studied with Joonas Kokkonen and Aare Merikanto at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, where he later taught **Turning point** In the late 1960s discovered a new, more direct style focused on simple resources; his Third String Quartet ('Some Aspects of Peltoniemi Hintrik's Funeral March', 1969) is based on an Ostrobothnian fiddle tune; his First Symphony (1971) is built on an F sharp minor chord International recognition Sallinen's career reached an international peak in the 1980s; the Royal Opera House, the BBC and the Savonlinna Opera Festival commissioned 'The King Goes Forth to France', premiered in 1984 Sallinen on Sallinen: 'I turn on the radio, listen to the music that comes out, and it takes quite a while before I realise that the music is my own. There are two reasons for this. First, I listen to my own works only on very rare occasions, and second, I have a bad memory, which helps make room for new works'

writes, 'Sallinen's conception of a symphony does not entail a symphonic progression

towards some final destination...He presents his musical material in relatively finished form, and then either obstinately repeats it or varies it in different ways.' Often, these processes of repetition or variation will sidle effortlessly into a dance.

It's a sign of his quality in both spheres that commentators can't seem to agree whether Sallinen is a symphonist who also wrote operas or an opera composer who happens to have penned eight symphonies (and counting). Of course, it doesn't really matter – and there are six concertos, six imposing string quartets and numerous other chamber works in addition. But if asked to name Sallinen's standout masterpiece to date, I'd point without hesitation to his fourth opera Kullervo, written for another architectural inauguration in Helsinki, that of the gleaming white opera house that sits a little further up Töölönlahti Bay from Finlandia Hall. The composer's first opera Ratsumies ('The Horseman') won him the Nordic Council Music Prize in 1974 and his second, Punianen ('The Red Line', 1978) toured to New York and London. Perhaps as a result, Covent Garden commissioned his third, Kuningas lähtee Ranskaan ('The King Goes Forth to France', 1983), which was followed by Kullervo (1988), Palatsi ('The Palace', 1993) and most recently Kuningas Lear ('King Lear', 1999).

In the event, *Kullervo* was first performed by the LA Opera almost two years before it opened Helsinki's new opera house.

It might seem an unlikely bedfellow, but there are notable parallels with Berg's *Lulu*: the unyielding trajectory of an individual's demise; the tragic, tidal undertow that pulls at the score almost from the first bar; the emergence of a keening, devastating 'big tune' that comes to saturate the whole stage in hopelessness; and the bold and successful use of non-operatic idioms (specifically, Sallinen's inspired decision to have the 'dream' sequence – the segment of the story more famously focused on by Sibelius – recounted by a ghostly bar-room singer, an untrained voice drifting along in a sort of tango-inflected blues). The vocal writing is outstanding here and throughout, and remarkably paced: the opera rises like yeast at the moment of maximum musical and theatrical impact, a shattering experience for the audience or listener.

Not everyone, though, appreciated *Kullervo* and the associated Finnish 'opera boom' incubated by the likes of Sallinen and his colleague Joonas Kokkonen. The 'Ears Open' movement spearheaded by Esa-Pekka Salonen and others derided these operas as so-called 'fur hat' works, cleaving to dubious notions of Finnish nationhood and heroism that didn't sit easily in the brave new Finland of the '80s and '90s – a young, forward-looking country leading the way in global telecommunications. That might explain Sallinen's choice of a more universal subject matter for his most recent opera. But the opera boom's legacy undeniably lives on, not least in the Finnish National Opera's insistence that new, main-stage works from local composers be programmed most seasons.

There will be those, too, who find Sallinen's tonal idiom passé. But just as Morton Feldman allegedly told a class of Darmstadt pioneers, 'The people you think are radicals might really be conservatives; the people you think are conservative might actually be radical' (before singing the theme from Sibelius's Fifth Symphony, as it happens), tonality is the wrong end of the telescope from which to judge Sallinen's work. It's not the end result of his extraordinary way with musical material, but a means of getting there. **6**

DISCOVERING AULIS SALLINEN ON DISC

Three recordings: two operas and a defining symphony



Symphony No 6. Cello Concerto

Norrköping Symphony Orchestra / Ari Rasilainen CPO (E) CPO999 971-2 (5/10)

For an instant handle on Sallinen the symphonist and believe me, it will be instant - head for

those CPO recordings and begin with the Sixth.



The Red Line

Finnish National Opera / Mikko Franck
Ondine (F) CDV4008

Sallinen's opera *The Red Line* deals with the concept of democracy at its most local and

universal; Jorma Hynninen stars in this DVD of the 2010 staging at the Finnish National Opera



Kullervo

Finnish National Opera / Ulf Söderblom Ondine (Ē) → ODE1258-2T (8/92)

Sallinen's stage masterpiece is fashioned absolutely in the grand operatic tradition of tragedy, big tunes

and vocal outpouring (of all kinds) – a compelling listen that only grows in resonance

gramophone.co.uk

Vocal



David Fallows listens to The Tallis Scholars' new Taverner disc:

Each phrase has its individuality, turned to perfection by his singers. And the textures are marvellously transparent. > REVIEW ON PAGE 81



Alexandra Coghlan on a new ECM album mixing old and new:

If you're casting around for musical inspiration, you could do a lot worse than Gesualdo' > REVIEW ON PAGE 83

JS Bach

'Secular Cantatas, Vol 5: Birthday Cantatas' Cantatas - No 213, Lasst uns sorgen, lasst uns wachen; No 214, Tönet, ihr Pauken! Erschallet, Trompeten!

Joanne Lunn sop Robin Blaze counterten
Makoto Sakurada ten Dominik Wörner bass
Bach Collegium Japan / Masaaki Suzuki
BIS 🗈 🕮 BIS2161 (73' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



With all the trappings of secular commissions – including additional remuneration and an

opportunity for luxuriant scoring – Bach wrote these two birthday cantatas for members of the Elector of Saxony's family in the early 1730s with texts by the librettist Picander, he of the *St Matthew Passion*. Both works were recast soon afterwards as key movements of the *Christmas Oratorio* which has, arguably, hampered our appreciation of them; the lustful implications of sleep in 'Schlafe, mein Liebster' in No 213 ('Hercules at the Crossroads', as the work has become best known) transformed into the tender cradle aria in Part 2 of the oratorio might render the original as the poor (and undesirable) relation.

To regain the initiative for these pieces, Suzuki inflects the music skilfully by projecting fully the dramatic essence and character of the secular texts. In this fifth disc of secular cantatas, the arias especially contain a spirit of abandon and gestural immediacy which might wear thin in the context of a large-scale oratorio but are deftly realised in pacy tempi, vibrant wind obbligatos and immediacy of articulation.

The allegorical figures are affectingly presented, with Joanne Lunn consistently accomplished in almost all her tasks (if with a slight tendency to bulge rather unyieldingly on long notes). She's delectably Semele-like in Bellona's flirtatious aria in No 214, the only aria in either work for which Bach found no place in the *Christmas Oratorio*. Robin Blaze, as Hercules, moves heroically through the temptations of

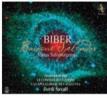
depravity towards longed-for virtue. Dominik Wörner is no Peter Kooij but does a serviceable job in the master's absence.

The choruses exhibit buoyancy as well as beautifully rich and balanced recorded sound. The challenge to modern ears remains the super-'historical' brass (horns and trumpets respectively), bravely played on instruments without the modern corrective of tuning holes. Whether this accounts for the flatness prevalent in the opening of BWV213, the effect is something of a double-edged sword in weighing up the beauties of 'authentic' timbre and our expectation these days to hear music 'in tune'. Discuss! Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

Biber

'Baroque Splendor'

Biber Missa Salisburgensis. Battalia. Plaudite tympana. Sonata Sancti Polycarpi Riedl Fanfara La Capella Reial de Catalunya; Hespèrion XXI; Le Concert des Nations / Jordi Savall
Alia Vox 🗈 🥯 AVSA9912 (72' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



That Biber's massive 54-part *Missa Salisburgensis* of 1682 was for a long time

carelessly attributed to Orazio Benevoli and dated 1628 shows how wrong scholars can sometimes get things without anybody noticing, and probably explains the lack of interest in it until its re-attribution to Biber in the 1970s. Since then, however, things have looked up for it (as they have for Biber), and this is at least its fourth recording, its rivals including fine earlier ones conducted by Paul McCreesh (A/98) and Ton Koopman (11/99). It also follows on from Jordi Savall's own recordings of Biber's A major Requiem and Missa Bruxellensis, reflecting increased general appreciation of the great 17th-century violinist as a composer of sacred vocal music.

Those earlier recordings of Savall's were made in Salzburg Cathedral, the cavernous acoustic for which they were originally intended by Biber in his capacity as Kapellmeister to the Archbishop's court. The Missa Salisburgensis was likewise written for the Cathedral - almost certainly for the 1100th anniversary of the founding of the Salzburg archbishopric - but this time Savall has recorded it in the chapel of Cardona Castle in Catalonia, a similarly atmospheric space but also a more manageable one. This is an important advantage, for if your idea of Biber's sacred music is primarily of dialogues of choral block-harmonies rooted in the trumpet-and-drum keys, you may be surprised by some of the subtleties present in this work. Yes, it is a giant - voices, strings, recorders, oboes, dulcians, cornets, strings, trombones, drums and organ deployed in eight separate choirs - but surely few could find the lyrical tenderness of the 'Christe eleison', the plangently mounting lines of the 'Crucifixus' or the playful and intimate 'Osanna' wanting in delicacy. Biber manages these expressive contours with great skill and flexibility, too, making this perhaps his richest and most varied choral work.

Savall marshals the music with a keen sensibility to momentum, balance and colour. Koopman's account, made in Salzburg Cathedral, achieves a surprising brassy punch and lucidity, while McCreesh in Romsey Abbey is more massive, if occasionally a touch thunderously overbearing. Not that this is a piece about understatement; but, compared to these, Savall's more organically natural acoustic makes for an easier overall listen while losing only a little in forthright splendour. His coupling - trumpet fanfares by Riedl, Biber's motet Plaudite tympana and the earlier Sonata Sancti Polycarpi for nine trumpets, plus an oddly incongruous and cool Battalia imported from an earlier recording, seems a trifle unconsidered compared to the others' systems of interpolated sonatas. Still, the Mass is the thing here, and it certainly makes its awesome point. Lindsay Kemp

Bliss

Morning Heroes^a. Hymn to Apollo

aSamuel West orator BBC Symphony aChorus
and Orchestra / Sir Andrew Davis
Chandos © CHSA5159 (65' • DDD/DSD • T)



Translating Salzburg to Cardona: Jordi Savall chooses a Catalonian location for his recording of Biber's magnificent Missa Salisburgensis



It is over 40 years since the last recording of Bliss's choral symphony *Morning*

Heroes, written in 1930 as a memorial to his gifted brother, Kennard Bliss, killed at the Battle of the Somme. That thoroughly committed performance, made in 1974 by Charles Groves and the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus, is still very much worth having in its remastered version. However, this new recording is a revelation for its clarity (notably of the composer's vivid orchestral palette and imaginative choral writing), coherence and sheer emotional intensity.

One of the most striking features of the work is the part of the narrator in the opening and penultimate movements. In 1974, the deep, sonorous tones of John Westbrook fulfilled this role majestically, but Samuel West is undoubtedly his equal for the hypnotic modulation and control of his recitation, especially in the extraordinarily haunting (not to say terrifying) concept of Wilfred Owen's 'Spring Offensive' with timpani. Davis's handling of the multi-movement structure

of Bliss's poetic anthology, which ranges from the deeply personal to the collective, is sensitively paced and shaped. The careful grading of 'Hector's Farewell' is beautifully restrained to allow the narrator to shine through, while the different shades of melancholy mixed with those vivid sentiments of life and imminent death (which only war can engender) are powerfully conveyed, especially in the wonderful pastoral elegy for female voices, the ghostly setting of Whitman's 'By the bivouac's fitful flame' and the Bachian, passion-like final chorus, 'Last night rain fell over the scarred plateau'. The orchestral tone-poem Hymn to Apollo, reworked in 1965 from the original version of 1926 and characterised by its clean contours and processional motion, serves as a fitting contrast and may well have been part of the cathartic process, as *Morning* Heroes most certainly was, to exorcise his nightmares and the sorrow of his brother's death. Jeremy Dibble

Morning Heroes – comparative version: RLPO, Groves (3/75^R, 10/91^R) (EMI) 505909-2

Brahms · Bruckner

Brahms Ave Maria, Op 12^b. Ein deutsches Requiem, Op 45 - How lovely are thy dwellings^b. Fest- und Gedenksprüche, Op 109. Geistliches Lied, Op 30^b. Drei Motetten, Op 110 **Bruckner** Aequali^a - No 1; No 2. Ave Maria. Christus factus est. Ecce sacerdos^{ab}. Locus iste. Os justi. Tota pulchra es^b. Virga Jesse

Tenebrae / Nigel Short with a Mark Templeton, a Helen Vollam, a Patrick Jackman tbns

^bAlexander Mason *org*

Signum (F) SIGCD430 (75' • DDD • T/t)



Without a full complement of sopranos ready to hurl out and sustain

high Cs, a choir preparing to record Bruckner may as well pack up and go home. Basses must likewise anchor the motets with steady low Cs and Ds. The advantages of a small professional choir in this music are therefore evident, provided they are not so small in number or soloistic in timbre as to let individual voices obtrude. Happily, Tenebrae score on all counts. They submit with impressive stamina and unfailing intonation to Bruckner's instrumental scoring and phrasing, which take little account of singers' requirements for rest and oxygen.

In his spacious pacing and carefully moulded phrasing, Nigel Short reveals the



thematic links to the symphonies in *Virga Jesse* and *Ecce sacerdos*. The results make hardly less awesome an impact than the 'symphonic' recordings by the Bavarian Radio Choir and Eugen Jochum, and with notably greater technical finesse. The greater stress placed by Brahms on innerpart movement is reflected in supple accounts of his two late motet triptychs with a refreshingly full-blooded approach to consonants.

The Schubertian heritage common to both composers reveals itself in contradistinctive ways: harmony in Bruckner, melody in Brahms. Here I feel the Brahms performances, impressive on their own terms, are writ too large for their form. The codas of both the Geistliches Lied and 'How lovely are thy dwellings' are long and lovely but stretched beyond the point of affectionate memory which was the stimulus for the album, explained by its producer Andrew Mellor in a touching introduction. A pair of Bruckner's Aequali frame the programme, nobly done by three London orchestral trombonists and recorded to take full advantage of the acoustic of London's Temple Church. Peter Quantrill

Bruckner motets – selected comparison: Jochum (8/69^R) (DG) 457 743-2GOR

Brahms

Ein deutsches Requiem, Op 45

Lore Binon SOP Tassis Christoyannis bar
Flemish Radio Choir; Brussels Philharmonic
Orchestra / Hervé Niquet

Evil Penguin (F) EPRCO019 (51' • DDD)

Brahms

Ein deutsches Requiem, Op 45 Genia Kühmeier sop Gerald Finley bar Netherlands Radio Choir; Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra / Mariss Jansons

RCO Live © RCO15003 (68' • DDD • T/t)
Recorded live, September 20 & 21, 2012





The unenlightened, lamented Adrian Mole will never 'see Michaelangelo's Mona Lisa. Nor will they thrill to a Brahms Opera.' Perhaps the sage of Ashby-de-la-Zouch was right all along, for according to Hervé Niquet the *German Requiem* is the opera Brahms never wrote, and his recording certainly banishes from it the decorum and sentimentality which his booklet apologia claims are the accretions of tradition.

Be that as it may (and I don't think it is), from the mismatch between an orchestra

adopting period mores (complete with some 'authentic' brass tuning) and a chamber choir of young but vibratingly operatic voices arises a tension often encountered these days between stage and pit. A recessed recording made at the orchestra's home of the Flagey works against textual and rhythmic clarity: violins, sopranos and tenors come out on top of an unequal struggle, and neither soloist sounds especially comfortable catching their breath before the next phrase. And at Niquet's speeds, no wonder. They will arouse a lifeand-death battle in Brahms's chosen texts for some listeners, perhaps especially those who have previously sided with George Bernard Shaw in contending that the piece is to be borne patiently only by the corpse.

The narrative arc of the sixth movement is thrillingly conveyed as such rather than as three separate blocks. The long fugue may come closer than any other passage in the Requiem to the Nationalist and neo-Handelian bombast of the Triumphlied: better that than the well-fed but selfsatisfied counterpoint of almost every other version. Nikolaus Harnoncourt does better than most in shading the lines away to made a three-dimensional fugue, but elsewhere his soloists are hamstrung by reverential tempi, and Niquet takes the early-Baroque implications of a dancing sobriety in the outer movements to refreshing extremes: Gardiner, Norrington, Rattle and Järvi are now establishment figures by comparison and only Marin Alsop's underrated recording offers a rival alternative for a different kind of German Requiem.

Consolation, tonal and spiritual, arrives with the new recording from Mariss Jansons, made live in 2012 but incomparably more poised than Niquet, and yet showing a noticeable evolution from the charcoal-suited mourner of a Bavarian radio broadcast from four years earlier. In the unforced transparency of the Concertgebouw, hall and ensemble, every strand is audible, nothing is too much, but the antiseptic implications of such loving care are swept away by the pleasure taken in each phrase. Trailing bassoons in the third movement, smiling clarinet arabesques in the fourth, viola sextuplets accompanying Gerald Finley in the sixth: these can be found elsewhere but only when the conductor or the microphone snaps the spotlight on them. Genia Kühmeier is in more pliable voice than for Harnoncourt, freer with the promise of maternal comfort. The Netherlands Radio Choir have been superbly coached by Michael Gläser: massed enunciation so artlessly natural takes a lot of practice. In

his quietly accomplished way, Jansons demands your attention no less than Niquet. Peter Quantrill

Selected comparison:

VPO, Harnoncourt (2/11) (RCA) 88697 72066-2

Gombert

Ave mater matris Dei. Ave salus mundi.
Benedicta es. Descendi in hortum meum.
Domine, non secundum peccata. Emendus in
melius. O beata Maria. O, Crux, splendidior.
O, Domina mundi. O, flos campi. O, Jesu Christe.
Peccata mea. Salve regina. Sancta et
immaculata. Sancta Maria mater Dei. Si bona
suscepimus. Si ignoras te. Tribulatio cordis mei.
Veni dilecta mea

Beauty Farm

Fra Bernardo (M) (2) FB1504211 (117' • DDD • T)



Nicolas Gombert (*c*1495-1560) was a significant composer of the post-Josquin

generation and a singer disgraced from the Emperor Charles V's court chapel when accused of molesting a choirboy. Sentenced to the galleys, he composed 'swansongs' which won him the emperor's pardon. He is chiefly remembered for his 160-plus motets, 19 of which are handsomely represented on this double-album debut from the aptly named Beauty Farm, a new vocal ensemble specialising in Franco-Flemish Renaissance polyphony.

The group comprises one countertenor, three tenors and two basses, each hailing from one or more established European vocal ensembles. In these motets they tend towards a rich, low-pitched blended sound reminiscent of the Huelgas Ensemble's 1992 Gombert release (Sony, 4/93). Vocal lines are clearly delineated but the overall texture remains smooth and calm. The combination of a rich, sonorous acoustic and a warm countertenor on the top line creates an immediately recognisable Low Countries blend.

As a composer, Gombert is a figure notable for pushing at the boundaries of the modal music system. His polyphony is suave yet harmonically challenging. The editions by Jorge Martín recorded here take a conservative approach to *musica ficta*, which allows Beauty Farm to avoid short-range gestures in preference for a rolling longrange polyphonic trajectory characteristic of the *ars perfecta*. In this respect Beauty Farm's interpretations evoke the spirit of the Hilliard Ensemble, offering a nod to their classic polyphonic style: never hurrying, never obviously cadencing. The results are indeed beautiful, if not slightly too-cool-for-

school for my taste. Compare the opening of *O beata Maria* with Henry's Eight (1996), who worked with Australian musicologist John O'Donnell. Henry's Eight created a slow, sensual texture pierced by a throbbing false relation on 'Maria'. Beauty Farm, on the other hand, are notably quicker with a less stringent vocal tone, the Marian purplepatch subsumed into the larger phrase.

Despite lacking that frisson of mischief we have come to expect from Gombert, this is one of the most unrelentingly beautiful discs of his music to date. I welcome the focus on long-range polyphonic phrases allowing Gombert's smooth polyphonic lines to take centre stage. Beauty Farm have made a debut of note. **Edward Breen**

Heggie

'The moon's a gong, hung in the wild'
The Breaking Waves - Advent; Darkness; Music.
Folksong Arrangements. Songs to the Moon.
Statuesque - Henry Moore: Reclining Figure in
Elmwood; Pablo Picasso: Head of a Woman;
Winged Vitory: We're Through. Winter Roses Looking West: Sweet Light. White in the Moon

Angelika Kirchschlager *mez*Maurice Lammerts van Bueren *pf*Avie (F) AV2349 (53' • DDD • T)



By his own admission, Jake Heggie is a theatre composer who can make a drama of a song

text, a journey of any poem: 'Sometimes physical journeys,' he says, 'and always emotional ones.' Those last words go without saying for anyone who has experienced his work in opera and song and anyone who has read my previous writings on him in these pages. Heggie has a nose for theatre and a need for fantasy and, as I have said before, he isn't afraid to embrace the great legacy of American song and musical theatre. He writes tunes as readily as he invokes atmosphere, and if the spirit of the song suggests a foray into jazz or blues or even pop culture, he's there, following his nose, his instinct. Above all, he's grateful to sing – singers (many of them) like Frederica von Stade, Joyce DiDonato and now Angelika Kirchschlager and her sympathetic pianist Maurice Lammerts van Bueren are drawn to his work.

But it needs careful, finely nuanced handling if the operatic elements of songs like these are not to appear overly ripe or self-consciously 'arch' – and that's the issue I have with Kirchschlager. She enunciates with care out of her native language; and

though she is clearly a stage animal, whether on concert platform or opera stage, these performances, for my taste, are always inclined to feel overworked – too big, too primary for the intimacy and delicacy of the settings. It's tough striking a balance when the natural inclination of an operatic voice – and indeed an operatic personality – is one of projection rather than inwardness.

In *Statuesque* (words by Gene Scheer, a regular collaborator), the sculptural curvaceousness is there but the 'living statues' (there is a kinship here to the dramatic Camille Claudel cycle *Into the Fire* which Joyce DiDonato has so made her own – Pentatone, 1/14) are distinctly operatic in manner and I can't help feeling that I would like to hear them sung by a singing actor as opposed to an acting singer. Equally, the characterisation in the wonderfully inventive and quirky *Songs to the Moon* does not slip effortlessly into the musical vernacular of the settings, particularly when Heggie so casually courts with jazz.

In *The Breaking Waves* – three songs to words by Sister Helen Prejean, she of *Dead Man Walking*, Heggie's much-admired and successful opera – I don't feel a natural empathy with gospel singing which is so integral to the settings. It needs to be felt rather than imitated. The rather chilly hall acoustic of the recording doesn't exactly draw one in, either.

Kirchschlager is at her best when she stops 'playing' the drama and relaxes into a vocal line, plain and simple. Winter Roses typifies Heggie's natural way with melody, and hearing him 'frame' the traditional folksongs – 'Barb'ry Allen', 'He's gone away' and 'Danny Boy' – reminds me of Britten in that the arrangements are at once respectful and freeing. 'White in the Moon', the final AE Housman setting, sets the seal on what we knew all along – that Heggie has a way with words. Edward Seckerson

Lassus

Prophetiae sybillarum. Angelus ad pastores ait. Ave Maria. Dixit Dominus. Magnificat superaurora lucis rutilat. Quem vidistis pastores. Videntes stellam

Vocalconsort Berlin / Daniel Reuss
Accent (F) ACC24307 (49' • DDD)



Of Lassus's largerscale cycles, the *Prophetiae sybillarum* is among the trickier

ones to bring off. It sits in a limbo between sacred and secular that can be so perplexing to modern-day sensibilities. The Latin texts are concerned with the sacred, but only indirectly, and Lassus's famous use of chromaticism (nowhere more so than in the opening bars, constantly trotted out in historical surveys) is probably meant to suggest their semi-mythical provenance. Although the *Prophetiae* now boasts a sizeable discography, this hybrid status may explain why no one recording has managed it entirely convincingly.

Vocalconsort Berlin's approach is most comparable to The Brabant Ensemble's for Hyperion, though the deeper acoustic imparts a 'bigger' sound. From a choral and technical perspective they may well offer the most rounded and vocally satisfying of the available alternatives. Both here and in the motets that complete the recital, Daniel Reuss's direction tends towards smooth lines and seamless transitions, an approach that obviously corresponds to the ensemble's sound but does little to bring out the essential strangeness of the Prophetiae. It's not just a matter of those chromatic turns: there are sudden leaps, shifts of register, wide gaps in the texture (especially below the top voice) and the obsessive repetition of certain words. Likewise, the frequent syllabic word-setting is highly suggestive of declamation, whereas the general dynamic never rises above *mezzo-forte*. Perhaps the deliberately subdued tone is meant to impart a dreamlike quality, but to my mind it misses the rhetorical edge that Lassus's bold gestures seem calculated to convey. As an introduction to a sybilline, not to say sphinx-like work, this may be the best we've got, but the search for a fully realised interpretation goes on. The accompanying motets are a rather piecemeal selection where several rival recordings of the Prophetiae offer something more substantial for their 'B-sides'. At under 50 minutes, it's also a thin serving of repertoire that's not in copyright. Fabrice Fitch

Selected comparisons: Brabant Ens (10/11) (HYPE) CDA67887

Meinardus

Luther in Worms

Catalina Bertucci sop Annette Gutjahr contr Clemens Löschmann, Corby Welch tens Ansgar Eimann, Markus Flaig, Clemens Heidrich, Matthias Vierweg basses Rheinische Kantorei; Concert Köln / Hermann Max CPO © © CPO777 540-2 (104' • DDD)



When Wagner remarked of Carl Loewe in 1875 that 'there is a serious



Daniel Reuss directs his Vocalconsort Berlin in the richly chromatic lines of Lassus's Prophetiae sybillarum

German master', he was more likely thinking of the ballads than Gutenberg, which is one of few precedents for this oratorio, composed the following year by Ludwig Meinardus (1827-96). Friedrich Nohr had exercised himself on the subject in 1849, and Bernhard Schick's Luther in Erfurt appeared in 1883 for the 400th-anniversary celebrations of Luther's birth, but Luther in Worms was performed across Germany that year, before drifting out of fashion. If indeed Meinardus had ever been in fashion - the Berlin Singakademie overlooked his work while performing and commissioning tens of others in similar vein.

Much of the foregoing is drawn from the fourth volume (2012) of *A History of the Oratorio*, Howard E Smither's magisterial survey in which Meinardus elicits two passing comments. This first recording of *Luther in Worms* deserves better than that. Its harmony may be half a century out of date, the nationalist undertow dubious to modern taste and neo-Handelian style even more so, but like its subject the piece stands up for itself. In a break from the composer's previous treatment of *Solomon* (1866) and *St Paul* (1857), *Luther in Worms* works against the grain of oratorio conventions – exemplified then and now by

Haydn's *Creation* – which strive for epic contemplation, restrict themselves to Biblical subjects and avoid developed character-identification. Here are no anonymous arias and summatory quartets, but substantial parts for Luther (bassbaritone); his friendly nun and later wife Katherina (soprano); knightly supporters; and the Emperor Charles V (high tenor) and his henchman Glapio (bass), who pronounce heresy on Luther before everyone else sings the 'Ein feste Burg' chorale which has acted throughout as one of several authentically Lutheran leitmotivic threads. The would-be high-flown text does not suggest that its author, one Wilhelm Rossmann, deserves to be rescued from obscurity any more than does HA Acworth, librettist for Elgar in King Olaf and Caractacus.

Both of its parts move with clunky transitions through recitative and arioso to arrive at extended finales. Luther's famous (if apocryphal) cry of 'Here I stand: I cannot do otherwise' is saved for the crucial confrontation between preacher and emperor, which Meinardus pitches between the exchanges of Christ and Pilate in the St John Passion and the banter of Sachs and Beckmesser in Die Meistersinger. Sparring choruses between Luther's adherents and their Catholic opponents have clear

Mendelssohnian echoes of the conflict between Baal and the followers of Elijah. Meinardus keeps horns and bassoons busy with orchestration on the border of original and odd, plainly developed from a study of Schumann, who had given guarded encouragement to the 19-year-old wouldbe composer. This is delineated strongly by this period-instrument studio recording, which otherwise does well by the piece.

All the solo and choral voices are young and keen, sometimes compensating for lack of resonance with tremulous overstatement, though I was taken with the penetrating contralto of Annette Gutjahr and the tenor Corby Welch, who declaims Luther's sentence with persuasively imperial force. 'Sexless opera-embryos': thus spake Wagner of oratorios in 1849. *Luther in Worms* is unlikely to have changed his mind, or to lead to a flood of Meinardus recordings, but it's a stirring curio.

Peter Quantrill

Mozart

'Mozart and the Weber Sisters'
Ah, vous dirai-je maman, K265ª. Alcandro, lo confesso...Non so d'onde viene, K294. Dans un bois solitaire, K308ª. Kanonisches Adagio, K410. Mass No 17, K427 - Et incarnatus est. Musik für einer Faschingspantomime, K446 - Adagio.



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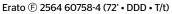


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Nehmt meinen Dank, K383. Les petits riens, K299*b* - Overture. Popoli di Tessaglia...lo non chiedo, eterni Dei, K316. Schon lacht der holde Frühling, K580. Solfeggio, K393 No 2ª. Thamos, König in Aegypten, K345 - No 5, Entr'acte. Vorrei spiegarvi, o Dio, K418. Die Zauberflöte - Der Hölle Rache; Marsch der Priester

Sabine Devieilhe sop ^aArnaud de Pasquale pf/org Ensemble Pygmalion / Raphäel Pichon





'A Mozartian hotch-potch' was my uncharitable first reaction when

I glanced through the contents of this disc. Eating humble pie, I confess to thoroughly enjoying this 'portrait de Mozart amoureux', as French soprano Sabine Devieilhe dubs it: music associated with three of the four Weber sisters, of whom Aloysia (Mozart's first love) and Josefa (the first Queen of the Night) were professional singers, and Constanze his wife. On the whole, the mixed-media sequence of arias, songs and instrumental pieces, rare (including a shrouded 'Canonic Adagio' for two basset horns and bassoon) and familiar, works well, even if several have only the slenderest connection to the Webers.

Launched by a fizzing account of the overture to the Paris ballet Les petits riens, the programme centres around three magnificent showpiece arias for Aloysia, famed both for her expressive cantabile and her coloratura prowess. Among her specialities were sustained pianissimo high notes; and I can't imagine they were more delicately floated than they are by Sabine Devieilhe, a lyric coloratura who combines a pure, sweet timbre and dazzling virtuosity. Although her Italian consonants could be sharper, Devieilhe also has a keen dramatic sense. In sympathetic dialogue with the oboe, she realises all the tenderness and agitation of 'Vorrei spiegarvi' (where the lovelorn Clorinda has fallen for the 'wrong' man); and in the spectacular 'Popoli di Tessaglia' she catches each fluctuation of Alceste's grief and protest in the opening recitative, then flies off into the stratosphere (up to top G, capping even the Queen of the Night's F) without shrillness or strain. The period orchestra are vivid accomplices, though with the voice forwardly recorded, wind detail can suffer in the balance.

In one of her signature roles, Devieilhe despatches the Queen's 'Der Hölle Rache' with terrific pizzazz, her poise *in alt* even enabling her to shade the high-wire

coloratura at will. You'll hear more sheerly powerful accounts of this warhorse, but few more brilliantly sung. Elsewhere Devieilhe makes the coyly risqué little ariette 'Dans un bois solitaire' into a miniature drama, and brings a smiling simplicity to 'Nehmt meinen Dank', Mozart's last music for Aloysia. I confess I could have done without the Solfège, the singing exercise he wrote for Constanze as a preparation for the 'Christe' of the C minor Mass. And, pace the informative booklet-note, it's unlikely that the unfinished 'Et incarnatus' - or indeed any of the Credo - was performed in St Peter's Abbey in Salzburg in 1783. Still, I'm not complaining when it's sung with such radiance and grace, at a tempo that brings out the music's pastoral lilt. If you expect the disc to end here, as it says on the tin, be prepared for a shock. It might initially have you spluttering. My guess is that it would have tickled Mozart's famously antic sense of humour.

Richard Wigmore

Stradella

San Giovanni Cristostomo
Nora Tabbush, Arianna Vendittelli sops
Filippo Mineccia counterten
Luca Cervoni ten Matteo Bellotto bass
Ensemble Mare Nostrum / Andrea De Carlo

Arcana (F) A389 (70' • DDD • T/t)



A vast amount of interesting music by Alessandro Stradella (1639-82) remains

unpublished, scarcely performed and unrecorded, but times could be gradually changing. This premiere recording of San Giovanni Cristostomo is the second instalment in the Stradella Project spearheaded by Andrea De Carlo and his Ensemble Mare Nostrum, in conjunction with the annual festival held in the composer's birthplace Nepi (a small town in the Lazio hills). The manuscript score was already in the Estense library in Modena by 1680, but it may have been first performed in Rome during the papacy of Innocent XI (elected in 1676). The libretto concerns the opposition of St John Chrysostom (the early fifth-century Archbishop of Constantinople) to the idolatrous and vain empress Eudoxia (who wishes to erect a statue to herself). Unable to tolerate the humble call to penitence from the holy man, she banishes him to a remote village in Armenia.

Scored for five voices and basso continuo accompaniment, the performance offers semi-dramatic characterisations of the

proud empress Eudoxia by the assertive and brightly-toned Arianna Vendittelli, whereas the dignity, modesty and firmness of the saintly title-character is conveyed sagely by Matteo Bellotto while having to navigate some deceptively fiendish music. Filippo Mineccia is boldly direct as a Roman envoy who attempts futilely to reason that Eudoxia should not punish an innocent man. Luca Cervoni sounds a little bit stretched as the sycophantic patriarch of Alexandria. Occasional short duets, a trio and a brief madrigalian chorus provide moments of attractive contrapuntal contrast. The seven continuo instrumentalists of Ensemble Mare Nostrum are organised to discreetly exploit a range of textures without any hint of routine complacency, and proceedings are directed with subtle rhythmic vitality by De Carlo. I look forward optimistically to how the Stradella Project might develop over the next few years.

David Vickers

Taverner

Missa Corona spinea.

Dum transisset Sabbatum - I; II **The Tallis Scholars / Peter Phillips**Gimell (F) CDGIMO46 (62' • DDD • T/t)



This is one for those who have fixed views on the speed of 16th-century music:

the marvellous 1989 recording of Taverner's Corona spinea Mass by The Sixteen with Harry Christophers lasts just over 40 minutes in what most people would view as a beautifully musical reading; the recent and highly praised recording by the Choir of St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, under Duncan Ferguson lasts 33 minutes, widely viewed as giving a necessary injection of energy into Taverner's music though to my ears losing far too many gorgeous details on the way and rather approximating many others; now Peter Phillips and The Tallis Scholars weigh in at almost 48 minutes. As I said two years ago about The Tallis Scholars' recording of Taverner's Gloria tibi trinitas Mass (11/13), I tend to like Phillips's tempi: each phrase has its individuality, turned to perfection by his singers. And the textures of Taverner's six-voice polyphony are marvellously transparent.

As I also said two years ago, the makeup of that recording, with the three *Magnificat* settings of Taverner, looked very much as though Phillips was aiming towards an *intégrale* of Taverner's music. Here he adds

the two five-voice *Dum transisset Sabbatum* settings, once again creating a package that will fit logically into a complete set. That would be a most marvellous contribution to the catalogue: Taverner is a seriously great composer but somehow not as widely recognised as, say, Tallis and Byrd.

What I like slightly less is the balance. The high pitch that Phillips adopts leaves the sopranos consistently singing very high indeed: as before, Janet Coxwell and Amy Hawarth are absolutely amazing in this work with perhaps the most complex soprano lines of the entire 16th century; but they do also occasionally sound forced and tired, and my own preference would be for the pitch-level a semitone lower adopted by Christophers and The Sixteen. About 20 years ago there was a lot of discussion of appropriate pitches for English polyphony of the 16th century: there was little agreement except on the point that it was too inflexible simply to jack everything up a minor third from modern concert pitch. This The Tallis Scholars are still doing, and I'm not sure it's a good solution. All the same, it is a gorgeous recording, and I take pleasure in welcoming it in the same week that The Tallis Scholars are giving their 2000th concert: keep going!

David Fallows

Missa Corona spinea – selected comparisons: Sixteen, Christophers (1/90^R) (HYPE) CDH55051 Ch of St Mary's Cath, Edinburgh, Ferguson (3/10) (DELP) DCD34023

'Anne Boleyn's Songbook'

'Music & Passions of a Tudor Queen' Anonymous Fer pietatis opem miseris mater. Forte si dulci Stigium boantem. Gentilz galans compaingnons. Laudate Dominum omnes gentes. Maria Magdalena et altera Maria. O Deathe rock me asleep. O virgo virginum. Popule meus quid feci tibi. Venes regrets, venes tous Brumel Que est ista. Sicut lilium inter spinas Compère Paranymphus salutat virginem Févin Tempus meum est ut revertar Josquin Liber generationis, Praeter rerum seriem, Stabat mater dolorosa **Mouton** In illo tempore. Tota pulchra es Sermisy Jouyssance vous donneray Clare Wilkinson voc Jacob Heringman lute Kirsty Whatley hp Alamire / David Skinner Obsidian M 2 CD715 (95' • DDD • T/t)



The manuscript concerned – MS1070 in the Royal College of Music – contains

42 pieces, all but three of them motets. It is basically French, in both repertory and script. But in the middle of Loyset

Compère's motet Paranymphus salutat virginem, more or less in the middle of the manuscript, an English hand has written 'Mistres A Bolleyne nowe thus' (those last words being her father's motto). This has given rise to a flurry of literature over the past 50 years: the great Edward Lowinsky suggested that the book was copied for Anne Boleyn while she was queen; David Skinner here suggests that, given the wording of her name, she was not yet queen but that it was copied between the beginning of her relationship with Henry VIII in 1526 and when her father was elevated to an earldom in 1529. Even so, the most likely copying date still seems to me the 1505-13 proposed a few years ago by Joshua Rifkin.

But it was a nice idea to follow Alamire's earlier discs of 'The Spy's Choirbook' (1/15), assuredly prepared for Henry VIII and his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, with selections from a manuscript that was apparently owned by his second wife. It is necessarily selections, because some pieces are incomplete (and some of them were already in 'The Spy's Choirbook'); but more than 95 minutes of music could have fitted onto two CDs. And with that decision comes the inevitable conclusion that there was no need to follow the sequence in the choirbook. So the sequence of pieces here is judged for musical effect and variety.

All three of the secular songs in the manuscript are included here, all sung eloquently by Clare Wilkinson with accompaniment by Jacob Heringman and Kirsty Whatley; and they add at the end O Deathe rock me asleep, which has nothing to do with the manuscript but has variously been associated with Anne Boleyn, although the music sounds more Elizabethan. For the rest, the motets are sturdily sung by a mixed chorus of 16 voices, with the programme - at least to my ear - focusing around three large Josquin pieces, Stabat mater, Liber generationis and Praeter rerum seriem, this last in an especially stirring performance. But the main impression is of the sheer variety of motets contained in this lovely collection.

David Fallows

'Brazilian Adventures'

Anonymous Matais de incêndios
Cyro de Souza Ascendit Deus
Lobo de Mesquita Ave Maria. Gloria.
Padre nosso Nunes Garcia Missa pastoril
para a noite de natal Pinto Beata virgo.
Lição de solfejo No 25. Oh! Pulchra es
Silva Gomes Missa a 8 vozes e instrumentos
Ex Cathedra / Jeffrey Skidmore
Hyperion © CDA68114 (78' • DDD)



Jeffrey Skidmore is not the first musician to be charmed by the cultural riches and

musical heritage of Brazil, and he won't be the last, yet his visit has culminated in an unexpectedly touching and beautiful portrait of Brazilian early music that is sure to surprise even the most intrepid musical explorers. 'Brazilian Adventures' is striking not only for its tender approach but also for the focus on later historical styles than one normally associates with these performers. The two Masses are contemporary with late Haydn and yet incorporate many late-Baroque features while also hearkening towards a softer, more intimate early Romantic sound. The movements of both Masses are framed and separated by a selection of motets hinting at the huge variety of Brazilian music that still awaits modern performance.

Missa pastoril para a noite de natal by José Maurício Nunes Garcia (1767-1830), a priest from Rio, is scored for three castratos, two falsettists, tenor and three basses. The great surprise of this Mass is that it was also orchestrated for a rich ensemble of violas, cellos, clarinets, bassoons, trumpets, horns, timpani and organ. An exquisitely simple pastoral theme infuses the work with a delicate wistful air to which the performers of Ex Cathedra respond beautifully. There is some wonderful clarinet-playing throughout and a sensational 'Laudamus te' solo from soprano Katie Trethewey. Skidmore's notes invoke sunshine-filled Christmases and this is an image that certainly shines through his interpretation.

Missa a 8 vozes e instrumentos by André da Silva Gomes (1752-1844), a Lisbon-born chapel master in São Paulo, is quite different both in composition and in performance. It has a festive flair and Skidmore brings out a buoyant and altogether brighter quality, emphasising the greater use of Baroque styles. There are some charmingly naive and boyish-sounding soprano solos from Elizabeth Drury which, along with the trumpet-writing, further emphasise the exuberance of Baroque melody in this beautiful Mass setting. Edward Breen

'Le Concert Royal de la Nuit'



after 'Ballet Royal de la Nuit', with music by Jean de Cambefort, Antoine Boësset, Louis Constantin, Michel Lambert, Francesco Cavalli, Luigi Rossi and Anonymous



Ex Cathedra recreate the Brazilian Classical period at All Hallows, Gospel Oak, north London last year

Ensemble Correspondances / Sébastien Daucé Harmonia Mundi (Ē) ② HMC95 2223/4 (153' • DDD • T/t)



On the evening of February 23, 1653, the Ballet Royal de la Nuit was performed at the Louvre

for the 15-year-old Louis XIV, who had recently stabilised his unsteady position on the throne after the Fronde civil wars. The lavish entertainment was organised by the poet Isaac de Bensérade into four parts described as *veilles* ('watches'), each representing a period of the night; it culminated in a grand ballet during which the young king himself danced as Apollo (ie the Sun King) banishing the spectre of gloomy night as dawn arrived – a political allegory for the crushing of the rebellion which nobody could have misunderstood.

Sébastien Daucé has designed a selective exposition of the musical dimension of the multifaceted *Ballet de la Nuit*. Vocal music by Jean de Cambefort includes a spellbinding solo for Night that begins the first *veille* (the alto soloist Lucile Richardot is accompanied sensuously by a consort of viols) and a hushed dialogue for Sleep and

Silence that commences the fourth veille (sung delicately by bass Etienne Bazola and soprano Caroline Bardot). Ensemble Correspondances play about two-thirds of the original 1653 dances, reconstructed expertly by Daucé from a manuscript first violin part copied nearly 40 years after the production. It is likely some instrumental music was written by members of the illustrious Vingt-quatre Violons du Roi, although one wonders if any anonymous bits might be the handiwork of the 20-year-old Lully (who danced five roles in the Ballet de la Nuit). His future father-in-law Michel Lambert is the composer of a dialogue sung sweetly by three uncredited Graces.

Daucé invokes the privilege of creative licence with the interpolation of numerous extracts from operas by Italians invited to Paris by Cardinal Mazarin during the early years of the Sun King's reign. The bulk of the third veille is compiled from Cavalli's Ercole amante (1662) and the fourth veille draws from Rossi's Orfeo (1647), including a beguiling Passacaille that seamlessly follows on from two lyrical airs by Antoine Boësset. A rotating team of up to 52 musicians traverse the musical spectrum from whispered intimacy to jovial ceremony. My only quibble is that the diverse authorship of the music could have

been cited more helpfully in Harmonia Mundi's libretto instead of the reader having to jump back and forth to abbreviations in the track-listing, but the copiously illustrated hardback book provides plenty of fascinating material to mull over. David Vickers

'Gesualdo'

Dean Carlo^a Gesualdo Moro Iasso. O crux benedicta Tüür L'ombra della croce. Psalmody ^aEstonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir; Tallinn Chamber Orchestra / Tõnu Kaljuste ECM New Series (§) 481 1800 (58' • DDD)



If you're casting around for musical inspiration, you could do a lot worse than

Carlo Gesualdo. A 16th-century prince and a composer, he is best remembered as a double-murderer – infamously stabbing his wife and her lover after discovering them in flagrante. It was the grief and penitence which followed that fuelled the composer's extraordinarily chromatic vocal writing – convulsions of disjunct melody and harmonic lurches that find no equal for several centuries.



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Thoughtfully programmed, in characteristic ECM style, this disc from Tõnu Kaljuste, the Tallinn Chamber Orchestra and the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir takes Gesualdo's motets and madrigals as a starting point, pairing Kaljuste's own arrangements of 'Moro lasso' and 'O crux benedicta' for string orchestra with Brett Dean's *Carlo* (1997) – a tone-poem for chamber orchestra, reimagining both Gesualdo's music and the 'fateful night' of the murders – and two works by Erkki-Sven Tüür.

Both Kaljuste's orchestra and his instinct are good ones; the insistent suspensions of Gesualdo's vocal writing – not so much sliding as grinding over one another – translate beautifully for strings, muted and thickly scored in close imitation of a viol consort. They offer a point of departure for the Dean, whose verbatim musical quotations of the start quickly dissolve into fragments of melody and sound, song giving way to whispers and breaths, counterpoint to a clattering Babel of unfinished musical thoughts.

Written especially for the album, Tüür's *L'ombra della croce* is altogether more affirmative, borrowing its mood and opening motifs from Gesualdo's motet 'O crux benedicta'. Thick strings cushion Gesualdo's sharper edges, a soft-focus approach to the past also found in Tüür's *Psalmody*, an attractive, rhythmically charged neo-classical fantasy for strings and voices, but one which – at over 20 minutes – rather overstays its welcome, despite carefully shaped performances.

Booklet-notes are inexcusably minimal and fail to include any texts. One can only assume that Kaljuste's project in musical archaeology is content simply to unearth. Interpretation and explication is left, bizarrely, to others. Alexandra Coghlan

'Poetry in Music'

Britten Hymn to Saint Cecilia East When David heard Gurney Since I believe in God the Father Almighty WH Harris Bring us, O Lord God. Faire is the heaven Howells Take him, earth, for cherishing MacMillan The Gallant Weaver Pearsall Lay a garland Ramsey When David heard Rubbra Eternitie. There is a spirit Tippett Dance, clarion air Tomkins When David heard Weelkes When David heard

The Sixteen / Harry Christophers Coro © COR16134 (71' • DDD • T/t)



The glowing textures of Harris's classic anthem *Faire* is the heaven give

way to an exuberant and rhythmically incisive account of Tippett's Dance, clarion air, while the direct, heartfelt expression of Weelkes's When David Heard is beautifully countered by the luminous, angelic wafting of high sopranos in MacMillan's The Gallant Weaver. Four tracks and less than 20 minutes into this disc it is clear that this is something really special.

That specialness comes not just from the fact that The Sixteen elevate everything they perform through their opulent musicality and supreme clarity of tone, but from Harry Christophers's intuitive grasp of the marriage of music and words in all 14 of these powerfully perceptive musical responses to beautifully crafted English texts. Many of these anthems will be familiar to those with a grounding in the great Anglican choral tradition, but none sounds familiar here. Rather, these performances reveal a depth of expression and artistic intensity in music we thought we knew but now realise we only partially comprehended. These performances are, in every sense of the word, revelatory.

Of the less familiar items, Ivor Gurney's setting of Robert Bridge's reimagining of the Creed, Since I believe in God, is a deeply intense work, written while the composer was incarcerated in a mental hospital in Dartford (a doubly grim location for such a sublime creation), while Rubbra's free-flowing There is a spirit provides a lovely vehicle for the exquisite soprano of Julie Cooper. It is also good to be reminded that Robert Pearsall contributed far more to the repertory of English choirs than his famous version of In dulci jubilo, echoes of which are, however, never far from the surface in The Sixteen's warmly expressive account of Lay a Garland.

Marc Rochester

'Time and its Passing'

JS Bach Mass, BWV232 - Et incarnatus est Byrd Diligies Dominum Cruft These Hours Finzi Haste on, my joys! Gibbons What is our life? Howells Even such is time G Jackson To Morning Kodály Esti dal (Evening Song)
Ley A Prayer of King Henry VI Parry Music, when soft voices die Pärt Nunc dimittis. ...which was the son of... Recknell Ozymandias Rowarth The Evening Watch Tallis Miserere nostri. Thou wast, O God, and thou wast blest Tavener O, do not move Traditional The Three Ravens (arr E Chapman) Victoria Requiem - Lux aeterna

Rodolfus Choir / Ralph Allwood with Max Barley org Signum ® SIGCD445 (74' • DDD • T/t)



There's a moment of provocative, eyemeeting loveliness on this recording from

Ralph Allwood's Rodolfus Choir that singlehandedly makes the case against the increasing digital fragmentation of our listening – cherry-picking a track here, a track there. Tallis's exquisite hymn *Thou wast*, *O God* (best known as the theme for Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*) concludes in sober homophony – low, intimate, inward. Barely has its final chord finished before the brilliance of Gabriel Jackson's *To Morning* bursts into the ears, giddy with radiance, ecstatic as Blake's text. It's artful programming that hits its emotional mark with artless directness.

Six hundred years of choral music from across Europe – works by Victoria, Tallis and Bach to Jackson, Kodály and Tavener – is united here by ideas of time. The inevitability of death and the fragility of life (Shelley's 'Ozymandias' sits centrally, in a contemporary setting by Thomas Recknell) jostle with music's own temporal power for top billing, and if some works strive harder than others to fit under Allwood's thematic umbrella, it's all in a good cause.

The fresh, unforced quality of these young singers brings a pleasant friction to grave-facing works like Gibbons's *What is our life?* and Howells's *Even such is time*, and comes into its own in the soft-focus sentimentality of Parry's *Music, when soft voices die.* Rooted in a warmly present bass section, the choral blend is always thoughtfully calibrated, and the Tallis *Thou wast* is a marked improvement on the choir's previous recording – distilled down to a more focused tone and intensity.

Just two issues keep this album behind comparable collections from The Sixteen, the Cambridge Singers and King's College, Cambridge. Too much warmth creeps into Arvo Pärt's *Nunc dimittis* and ... which was the son of..., denying the music the chilly restraint it paradoxically needs to flourish, and the choice of the 'Et incarnatus est' from Bach's B minor Mass as a final track is a misstep – a mongrel addition too far for a collection whose music is divided by more than it is united.

Alexandra Coghlan

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REISSUES

Rob Cowan enthuses about a Horowitz treasure trove and **Peter Quantrill** welcomes a celebration of Marcel Dupré

Mining the Horowitz archives



Fifty discs of magnificent Horowitz magic

nother Sony Horowitz blockbuster collection – Vladimir Horowitz: The Unreleased Live Recordings 1966-1983 – that in some respects is even more revealing than 'Vladimir Horowitz Live at Carnegie Hall' (11/13), and that's saying something. The reason? Received wisdom documents two Horowitzs: the coltish firebrand we'd experienced prior to his sabbatical in 1953 and the wiser, more thoughtful, more subtly musical pianist who emerged after his 'historic return' to Carnegie Hall in 1965. Had the firebrand vanished in the meantime? Until a fortnight ago I would have said 'probably, yes'. But the evidence presented here, on 50 CDs (£110 or so), suggests a very definite 'no'. When it comes to scrutinising every note of every piece, Horowitz leaves no stone unturned: he picks, illuminates, disentangles, lays bare and cossets to an extent that other pianists wouldn't dare and if you're sometimes exasperated, even perplexed, by the results, you could certainly never be bored.

These are unedited performances, the bases of which were used for various Sony

and RCA commercial releases. Take Liszt's

B minor Sonata, first issued on RCA in 'The Horowitz Concerts 1977/1978', the performance date on both the originally released CD and this unedited version November 21, 1976. But the truth is that they sound nothing like each other. Right from the opening, aside from the different piano tone (and the presence of an audience), in this version you sense added tension, perspective and even delicacy. Yes, there are fluffs, quite a few at times, but the thunderbolt attack, ebb and flow and widened dynamic range approximate a fullon musical colossus rather than an old man revisiting his fiery youth. Scriabin's Fifth Sonata provides a similar case in point.

Then there are the seven (!) versions of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No 28, Op 101, the first five dating from 1967-68, conceptually alike though often different in detail, specifically in terms of nuancing and chord weighting, not to mention the absence or presence of minor errors. Jump then to Boston and New York in 1983 and the elegant acrobat falls from his tightrope, with wrong notes galore (compare the second movement in the performances from May 12, 1968, and May 15, 1983), though much of the expressive magic remains intact. The same two 1983 recitals also document two of three versions that we now have of Horowitz playing Schumann's Carnaval (a third, also from 1983 but recorded in Tokyo, is available to view and hear online). The New York performance is the best of the three, a blend of muscular attack, pointed wit and romance, occasionally dazzling, and as an overview not too far removed from the exalted vintage readings of, for example, Rachmaninov, Cortot and Michelangeli. The Boston performance is the more prone to error (neither version is exactly pristine) but to have this kaleidoscopic

sequence played by a man who in so many key respects seems like the pianistic embodiment of the *commedia dell'arte* is a privilege not to be taken lightly.

Other major works represented more than once include Rachmaninov's Second Sonata (again, the earlier the version sampled, the better it is) and Schumann's Concerto Without Orchestra, Humoreske (especially good) and Kreisleriana, not to mention countless shorter works by various composers. And of course there's that Horowitz staple, Chopin's 'Funeral March' Sonata, the March on its own movingly played in the wake of Martin Luther King's assassination. I was touched to read that Horowitz had refused to play in the American South because of the Jim Crow laws enforcing racial segregation. In fact, three months prior to his death, King had written to Horowitz thanking him for his support. The March was played in context without applause but the real stunner is the performance of the complete sonata that Horowitz gave at the White House on February 26, 1978, a reading that fully matches his incendiary RCA studio recording of 1950, swift, impetuous to a fault (another example of the old demon reborn), and played with its first-movement exposition repeat intact. The March itself is overwhelming and the recital also includes a spellbinding account of the A flat Polonaise and, to open the programme, a noble account of The Star-Spangled Banner. I should also mention Rachmaninov's Third Concerto under Zubin Mehta (more gripping than the roughly contemporaneous version under Eugene Ormandy) and Chopin's playful Introduction and Rondo in E flat, Op 16, the differences between the 1971 studio recording issued by Sony and the recital performances from Pasadena and Saint Louis in 1976 issued here truly palpable, with an added excitability, almost balletic at times, and the sense that Horowitz is truly 'in the zone'.

Horowitz is often cited as a pianist first and a musician second, someone whose passionate affair with the mechanics of playing, and the effects that those mechanics could generate, was secondary to the profounder aspects of whatever score was to hand. Rather, I would say that his outsize personality magnified or at the very least polished even the tiniest detail, so that the quietest pianissimo could 'tingle' as effectively as the loudest fortissimo could thunder. Listening to Hamlet as declaimed by Gielgud or Olivier in no way demeans Shakespeare's writing, even though the voices and acting styles are immediately recognisable. When it comes to musical or theatrical personality, size really does matter!

Sony's handsome presentation favours an LP-size box with the individual CDs packed into four separate compartments. I'm not mad on the format myself, but it seems a fairly popular way to do things nowadays. Speaking personally, I'd have preferred a sturdy shelf-size box with a book to match. The hardback book provided is informative, with full-page

sleeve reproductions, comprehensive programme details and an interesting interview between Bernard Horowitz (no relation) and producer Thomas Frost.

I'd call this a 'Horowitz hobbyist's paradise', an indulgence without parallel, the ideal Horowitzian Christmas present, but not really for the 'general' collector. He or she should opt instead for Sony's

Horowitz Original Jacket collection and, if subsequently hooked, should gravitate to 'Vladimir Horowitz Live at Carnegie Hall' in the first instance and then to this present production – which wild horses couldn't drag from me. Please note that in some cases audiences impatient to applaud cut in on the last note of a performance, a real bind for some listeners, I know. **Rob Cowan**

The organ maestro

onductors may improve with age but it's a rare instrumentalist whose faculties are not dimmed into their eighties by infirmity. Horszowski and Horowitz still had their wits about them, and their fingers. So, emphatically, did Marcel Dupré, the subject of the 10 albums in this box, freshly remastered by Thomas Fine, compiled with tremendous care by Decca from the organist's recordings for Philips and Mercury Living Presence, and supported by the Association des Amis de l'Art de Marcel Dupré.

For proof, turn straight to disc 9, on which the 80-year-old Dupré turns in a performance of his own Symphonie-Passion, composed almost 40 years earlier, of a still-staggering dexterity and élan vital. He dares tempi quicker than organists half his age, inflamed by the force of personality peculiar to a virtuoso composer-creator in the line from Bach and Beethoven to Adès and Rzewski. In his booklet-note, Fine is snooty about the microphone placing of the Philips engineers in Rouen Cathedral, but they captured no more than is necessary of the acoustic without blunting the impact of Dupré's playing, which leaps from the speakers half a century later.

The set falls into three intensive sets of sessions. Discs 1 and 2 were made at Saint Thomas Church, New York, in October 1957, with an imperiously driven orchestral outlier (disc 10), Saint-Saëns's *Organ* Symphony, made in Detroit with his old friend Paul Paray. The next five albums were cut in July 1959 on Cavaillé-Coll's masterpiece at Saint-Sulpice, of which Dupré had been the *titulaire* since his teacher Widor passed the baton in 1934; and the last two in October 1965 on another Cavaillé-Coll in Rouen.

The repertoire also divides neatly between Bach and the French Romantic school from Franck and Widor to himself and (a very little) Messiaen. Dupré's Bach represents another world, synchronous with Klemperer's recording of the *St Matthew Passion*; the important

difference being that Dupré had performed this music with Old Testament gravity throughout his career, as invaluable sets from Opal and EMI ('Orgues et Organistes français du XX^e siècle') make clear by contextualising his 1920s and '30s recordings alongside those of Tournemire, Vierne and Widor.

The style is certain, passed down like tablets of stone from teacher to pupil, the baseline rhythm less so, the feel for the melodic line unequivocal. The widest palette of colours emerges not through eccentric registration choices but as a by-product of the musico-theological determination to terrace layers of melody and counterpoint with absolute clarity. Chorales are more animated than largescale pieces; if the D major and E minor Preludes and Fugues run the risk of sonorous pedantry, the central pleno of the G major Pièce d'orgue is punishingly extended; the concluding Lentement is, naturally, done piano in the French style. Dupré's junior by 15 years, Maurice Duruflé is a model of rhythmic levity by comparison on another sadly deleted EMI compendium, five discs of Bach made on the then-new Gonzales instrument at Soissons: in tune but with hardly one tenth the character of Saint-Sulpice. You can't have everything...

Dupré may have entertained ambivalence about Messiaen, as did others of his generation. He hustles through Le banquet céleste and badly misreads the triplets in 'Les bergers' from La Nativité du Seigneur, which is graced by a voix humaine stop exquisitely untempered (even for a voix humaine). The upper reeds of Saint-Sulpice were also out of condition, to judge from the eighth variation of Dupré's own Variations sur un Noël, which sounds like a dazed fugitive from Ferneyhough's Sieben Sterne. Even so, Dupré's charisma is irresistible here, in two movements of his teacher Widor and the major works of his 'grand-teacher' Franck. The three Chorales are judiciously shaped by pushing on more than Franck indicates and saved



from sobriety by the opulently haloed strings of Saint Thomas's, but the Bourdon of Saint-Sulpice lends properly Wagnerian muscle to the *Grand pièce symphonique*, the conclusion of which becomes a showcase for Dupré's phenomenal pedal technique.

The packaging deserves more than a word: it is a model of its kind. Originalsleeve wallets do not require a magnifying glass, because the 132-page booklet reprints all the essays and full organ specifications. Unpublished photos show Dupré at work and with friends. Material contributed by the Association des Amis de l'Art de Marcel Dupré includes an informed biography; considerations of Dupré and recording; and, best of all, extracts from the diary of Jeanne, Mme Dupré, in New York and Detroit, mostly in company with Paray and his wife. Mme Dupré is up for fun and a generous soul, but she keeps a sharp eye on Marcel's well-being and on the Parays' extraordinary diet - 'both are real food lovers' - which included a mid-Atlantic dinner of 'Caviar sprinkled with grated cheese & I do not know what else - lobster mayonnaise (double portion), beef tenderloin, 5cm thick, huge asparagus, and a Grand Marnier soufflé'. Horrified gourmets, recording historians, music lovers of all stripes and, yes, even organists should find in this set much to enthral and instruct them. Peter Quantrill @

THE RECORDINGS

Vladimir Horowitz: The Unreleased Live Recordings 1966-1983

Sony Classical (\$) (50 discs) 88843 05458-2

Marcel Dupré: The Mercury Living Presence Recordings

Decca (\$) (10) 478 8388



David Vickers on an excellent new version of Mozart's Il re pastore:

'Ian Page's unobtrusive pacing of the pastoral mini-drama and sage weighting of recitatives pull the listener along' ▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 91



Mike Ashman listens to the first instalment of a new Naxos Ring:

Matthias Goerne sings Wotan beautifully, with much baritonal sophistication and predictable care for words' ▶ REVIEW ON PAGE 93

Bellini

I Capuleti e i Montecchi Valentina Farcas sop.....Giulietta Vivica Genaux mezRomeo Davide Giusti ten.....Tebaldo Ugo Guagliardo bass......Capellio Fabrizio Beggi bass.....Lorenzo

Belcanto Chorus; Europa Galante / Fabio Biondi Glossa F 2 GCD923404 (120' • DDD • S/T/t)



Fabio Biondi's recording of I Capuleti e i Montecchi is the first to appear on period

instruments. Caught in the dry acoustic of Rieti's Teatro Flavio Vespasiano, there is plenty to please in Europa Galante's performance, but also to infuriate in equal measure. Bellini's star-cross'd lovers aren't really inspired by Shakespeare but Felice Romani's libretto is drawn from the same Italian sources. The opera was dashed off in just six weeks in early 1830, in time for the Venice Carnival season. To aid the compositional process, Bellini borrowed mercilessly from his recent Parma flop Zaira, with eight numbers purloined. Much of the writing is thin and formulaic, although Giulietta's 'Oh! quante volte!' originally Nelly's romanza from Adelson e Salvini - stands at a higher level of inspiration. A successful performance relies on excellent bel canto technique for the leading couple, especially the mezzo singing the travesty role of Romeo.

Biondi casts the Alaskan mezzo Vivica Genaux as Romeo. Usually heard in Baroque repertory and the machine-gun rattle of Rossini, Genaux's voice is an acquired taste. Her chest register has a metallic edge not unlike Marilyn Horne's, but her upper register is wiry. Unfortunately, you can often hear the gear changes, but this doesn't prevent her Act 1 cabaletta 'La tremenda ultrice spada' from being tremendously exciting. Elīna Garanča, on DG's 2008 recording, is much more the bel canto stylist. Genaux's vibrato gapes rather wide at times, making her

contributions to the duet with Giulietta, 'Vieni, in me riposa', a trial. I've enjoyed her far more in Vivaldi.

The Romanian soprano Valentina Farcas is better as Giulietta, although she is inclined to over-emote. Her light, silvery soprano lends a fragility to her character that Anna Netrebko doesn't always manage, although she and Genaux don't blend anywhere near as well in duet as Netrebko and Garanča. Fabrizio Beggi is a solid Lorenzo but Davide Giusti's Tebaldo is rather pinched and ungainly in his sole aria.

Biondi certainly draws some exciting sounds from Europa Galante, lively woodwinds and thunderous timpani injecting tangy period-instrument flavours to proceedings. He zips along breezily, eight minutes swifter than Fabio Luisi, himself no slouch. The flute-and-harp introduction to 'Oh! quante volte!' has airy lightness, although the natural horn here is on quavery form. Lorenzo Coppola's clarinet contributions are poised. However, the 17 strings sound anaemic and the recording suffers from a hyperactive fortepianist tinkling her way busily through the score. Other period-instrument Bellini - Norma and La Sonnambula (both Decca/ La Scintilla) – don't introduce fortepiano continuo and Biondi offers no compelling reason for one in his booklet-note. Definitely a case of sample before you buy.

Mark Pullinger

Selected comparison: Luisi (3/09) (DG) 477 8031GH2

Cavalli

'Heroines of the Venetian Baroque' Arias and excerpts from Gli amore de Apollo e di Dafne, Artemisia, La Calisto, Il Ciro, Didone, La Doriclea, Egisto, Elena, Eliogabalo, Ercole amante, Erismena, L'Eritrea, Giasone, Hipermestra, Mutio Scevola, Le nozze di Teti e di Peleo, Orimonte, L'Orione, Oristeo, L'Ormindo, Pompeo Magno, La Rosinda, Scipione affricano, La Statira, La Veremonda, La virtù dei strali d'Amore and Xerse Mariana Flores sop Anna Reinhold mez Cappella Mediterranea; Clematis / Leonardo García Alarcón

Ricercar © 2 RIC359 (110' • DDD • T/t)

Cavalli

'L'amore innamorato'

Artemisia - Affliggetemi, guai dolenti; Dammi morte. La Calisto - Ninfa bella; Non e maggior piacere: Piante ombrose: Restino imbalsamate: Verginella io morir vo'; Vieni, vieni in questo seno. Didone - Alle ruine del mio regno; L'alma fiacca svani. Eliogabalo - Sinfonia. Giasone - Sinfonia. L'Ormindo - Prologue; Che citta. Libro quarto d'intavolatura di chitarrone - Toccata prima. Il primo libro di canzone - La suave melodia L'Arpeggiata / Christina Pluhar

Erato © 2564 61664-2 (67' • DDD • T/t) De luxe edition (F) (CD + ≥ 2564 61664-3





Cavalli composed more than 30 operas for five different Venetian theatres, and most of the scores survive. Recordings of complete stage works are not exactly rare but constitute a drop in a very large ocean. Leonardo García Alarcón's double album 'Heroines of the Venetian Baroque' is a clever chronological narrative that draws diverse extracts (often very short) from 27 different operas dating between 1639 and 1667, most of them sung by Mariana Flores. Proci's impassioned 'Volgi, deh volgi il piede' from Gli amori di Apollo e Dafne has melodic leaps, moments of tormented dissonance and reiterated refrains that are reminiscent of Monteverdi's famous lament from Arianna (revived during the same 1640 Carnival season). Interspersed among doleful scenes are lowbrow comic complaints about Cupid from Egisto (1643), L'Ormindo (1644) and La Doriclea (1645). Flores's softer languid singing aptly conveys a nymph's erotic longing for the return of her lover Jupiter (La Calisto, 1651). Isifile's lament 'Lassa, che far degg'io?' in Giasone (1649) is sequenced next to a vividly dramatic account of her rival Medea's incantation scene - the latter sung ardently by mezzo-soprano Anna Reinhold.

The two singers join together in a few dissimilar scenes such as the flamenco-infused depiction of a Spanish battle in *La Veremonda* (1653). Flores's depiction of the enraged Juno in *Ercole amante* (Paris, 1662) is a potent *tour de force*, whereas the simile imagery of waves is realised beautifully in the gently rolling and overlapping string ritornellos that accompany Giulia's 'Come al mar corrono i fiumi' from *Pompeo Magno* (1666). The recital's multi-layered trajectory concludes with a quartet sung by two pairs of reunited lovers at the end of *Eliogabalo* (1667).

Christina Pluhar and L'Arpeggiata take their recital's title 'L'amore innamorato' from an early lost opera (1642). Up to 10 vivacious continuo pluckers generate lilting energy that transports listeners on an imaginative whistle-stop tour of Cavalli's operas. Hana Blažíková's nimble diminutions beguile in Harmony's prologue to L'Ormindo (addressed to the good citizens of La Serenissima), and her plaintive chromatic lines in 'Affliggetemi, guai dolenti' from Artemisia (1657) combine superb technique and harmonic intelligence. Calisto's enraptured 'Restino imbalsamate' (the only selection duplicated in both recitals) is charged with erotic languor by Nuria Rial, who elsewhere delivers gleeful humour in Nerillo's thinly disguised paean to the craziness of Venice (L'Ormindo) and evokes tragic despair in Cassandra's lament from La Didone (1641).

Almost every number is credited transparently as having been 'arranged' by Pluhar, which probably tells the wary purist something about improvisational flights of fancy (Alarcón is not immune to some interventionist touching-up either). Not everyone will relish the fusion cuisine served up by Pluhar's realisations – 'Ninfa bella' from *La Calisto* turns into an instrumental jam session not far removed from the Latinjazz-rock of the early 1970s band Santana – but the singing is frequently sensational and L'Arpeggiata's colourful playing conjures alluring fantasy. **David Vickers**

Handel

Agrippina	
Ulrike Schneider mez	Agrippina
Jake Arditti counterten	Nerone
Ida Falk Winland sop	Poppea
João Fernandes bass	Claudio
Crristopher Ainslie counterten	Ottone
Ross Ramgobin bar	Pallante
Owen Willetts counterten	Mago Narciso
Ronaldo Steiner bar	Lesbo
Göttingen Festival Orchestra /	
Laurence Cummings	
Accent © 3 ACC26404 (3h 36' • D	DDD • S/T/t)



Handel's only Venetian opera was the triumphant climax to his extended grand

tour around Italy. Recorded live at the Göttingen Handel Festival last May, this staged production was the premiere of a new critical edition by the musicologist John E Sawyer, which alerted the production team to the possibility of adding a short aria for Poppea that Handel discarded during the composition process. On the other hand, a few recitatives are discreetly abridged and the deus ex machina close is omitted. However, its three-and-ahalf-hour duration means nobody in their right mind would complain about a lack of musicodramatic substance to get their teeth into. The international orchestra of leading expert practitioners play thrillingly; the overture is one of Handel's best, and it has a vivid synergy between alert strings, crisp continuo and dextrous solo oboe passages.

Agrippina's 'Pensieri, voi tormentate' is played explosively by the orchestra and sung potently by Ulrike Schneider, whose characterisation of the scheming titlecharacter is unusually acerbic and perhaps even insecure, with clear hints that the empress's glory days are long behind her. Vulnerability and the creaking effects of advancing age are also evident in João Fernandes's interpretation of the Emperor Claudius; his attempt to seduce Poppea in 'Vieni, o cara' is sung with a hint of weariness amid the seductive tenderness (and it is played gorgeously by the softly sensual strings). Ida Falk Winland's brighttoned voice is overly tremulous in Poppea's first aria 'Vaghe perle', but her robust technique is shown to fine advantage in 'Se giunge un dispetto' - although perhaps Handel meant the mood of the accompaniment to be carefree rather than antagonistic.

Ottone is the only honourable character in the opera and therefore the unwitting victim of everyone else's machinations: Christopher Ainslie sings with an unyielding muskiness and quivering vibrato which diminish the poignant beauty of the character's plaintive 'Voi che udite il mio lamento', but he delivers 'Vaghe fonti' with unaffected directness. Jake Arditti is firm and characterful as the precocious and combustible Nerone; the satirical comedy of his piously distributing alms among the poor ('Qual piacere') is not transmitted on this occasion, but the spoilt brat's volatile tantrums come across

loudly and clearly in 'Come nube, che fugge dal vento', with dazzling concertante violins and oboes. The comic double-act of Agrippina's stooges Narciso and Pallante are sung impeccably by Owen Willetts and Ross Ramgobin.

An unfiltered live recording is inevitably a mixed bag for consumption away from the theatre, but the vivid dramatic conviction of this performance reconfirms the stature of *Agrippina* as Handel's first great operatic masterpiece. **David Vickers**

Handel

'The Power of Love'

Alcina - Tornami a vegheggiar. Almira - Geloso tormento. Ariodante - Il primo ardor. Giulio Cesare - Da tempeste; Piangerò. Orlando - Amor è qual vento. Partenope - Qual farfalleta. Rinaldo - Dunque i lacci...Ah crudel. Serse - Un cenno leggiadretto. Terpsichore (Il pastor fido) - Air; Ballo; Chaconne; Entrée (Jalousie). Teseo - Amarti si vorrei

Amanda Forsythe sop

Apollo's Fire / Jeanette Sorrell hpd

Avie

Avie AV2350 (69' • DDD • T/t)



It is no mean feat to produce a Handel opera aria recital containing two of

Cleopatra's most popular showpieces ('Piangerò la sorte mia' and 'Da tempeste') and also Morgana's flashy 'Tornami a vagheggiar' without things running on autopilot, but Amanda Forsythe's intelligent and characterful singing means there's no risk of these being merely yet another slog through audition warhorses. The remainder is a well-chosen batch. The shepherdess Dorinda's exasperated mockery about the folly of love ('Amor è qual vento') could do with a rustic treatment of the long pedal bass notes, but Forsythe's sparkling delivery shares a knowing wink. The lightweight top-heavy orchestral balance lacks the ideal theatrical punch for Atalanta's exuberant scheming in 'Un cenno leggiadretto' (Serse), but works elegantly in Partenope's whimsical observations on the vagaries of romantic attraction in 'Qual farfalletta' - and in both of these arias Forsythe's lightly nonchalant delivery of Martin Pearlman's embellishments is dazzling.

There is less familiar territory covered with the turbulent 'Geloso tormento' from Handel's first opera, *Almira* (Hamburg, 1705), which features an impressive *cantabile* oboe obbligato played by Debra Nagy. Forsythe plumbs the depths of Armida's self-pitying misery that Rinaldo

Recorded live, May 15 & 18, 2015

GRAMOPHONE Collector

RAMEAU OPFRAS

Richard Lawrence delves into a trio of recent Rameau releases on CD and DVD: Les Indes galantes and Zaïs from Christophe Rousset and Les Talens Lyriques, plus a premiere recording of the 1754 Anacréon from the OAE



Laura Scozzi's Bordeux production of Les Indes Galantes, now available on DVD

ollowing his comprehensive division of plays into categories – Pastoral-Comical, Tragical-Historical and so on – Polonius would have enjoyed boring Hamlet with a breakdown of Rameau's stage works: tragédie en musique, opéra-ballet, comédie-ballet, pastorale-béroïque, and that's not all. Here are an opéra-ballet and two examples of the ballet-béroïque: all three are operas, but with a lot of hopping and skipping.

Rameau burst on to the Parisian operatic scene at the age of 50 with *Hippolyte et Aricie*. Two years later, in 1735, came **Les Indes galantes**, his first *opéra-ballet*. In the Prologue, young European men follow the goddess Bellone off to war. L'Amour sends his cupids to 'the Indies' where alone, it seems, can true love be found. Four entrées follow, set respectively on an island in the Indian ocean ('Le turc généreux'), Peru ('Les Incas de Pérou'), Persia ('Les fleurs') and North America ('Les Sauvages'). Laura Scozzi's production puts a modern gloss on

the action which will probably irritate as many as it will delight. It certainly divided the audience at the Opéra National de Bordeaux to judge from the boos mingled with the applause at this performance filmed in February 2014,

Scozzi's Prologue introduces three female tourists, in T-shirts and shorts, who reappear in all the entrées. What can hardly fail to catch the eye is the complete nudity of the dancers, both men and women. Bellone, the goddess of war (amusingly written for a bass), enters on a motorised buggy. At the end, film of a plane and a map of Turkey lead to the first entrée.

This is where my own irritability set in. As written, the story has some similarity to Mozart's *Entführung*. Osman, a pasha, has fallen in love with his French slave Emilie. When her lover Valère is shipwrecked, Osman has both at his mercy; but he lets them go, having recognised Valère as the man who, sometime in the past, had

released him from captivity. And what have we here? Osman is a people trafficker; the all-important explanation for the Turk's generosity is omitted; and Emilie, far from departing with Valère, embraces Osman and remains with him on the island. In 'Les Incas' the priest in charge of the Festival of the Sun becomes a drug smuggler; we see him snorting a line of cocaine and the three tourists getting high on marijuana.

'Les fleurs', where Fatime disguises herself to see if her husband is unfaithful, becomes 'a golden opportunity to develop the theme of the condition of Woman throughout the world'. The sketchy synopsis in the booklet adds to the confusion by describing a different version of this entrée. And 'Les Sauvages', in which the daughter of an Indian chief chooses a warrior of her own kind rather than one of her European suitors, is turned into a clash between ecology and consumerism.

90 GRAMOPHONE NOVEMBER 2015 gramophone.co.uk

The sad thing is that locked into all this nonsense is a very fine musical performance. Under Christophe Rousset, Les Talens Lyriques play the dance movements with just the right combination, or rather variety, of vigour and sensibility, and together with the Bordeaux chorus are wonderfully vivid in tempest and earthquake. Anders Dahlin appears in all four entrées: although a bit rough in Valère's 'Hâtez-vous', he makes an admirably versatile haute-contre. Nathan Berg is an impressively villainous Huascar: why do we not hear more of this excellent, Guildhall-trained Canadian? Amel Brahim-Djelloul as Phani sings a rapturous 'Viens, Hymen', shadowing and shadowed by Jocelyn Daubigney's airy flute, the bass-line provided by the violins. In 'Les fleurs' she has an ornate 'air italien' (quoted by Strauss in Capriccio, incidentally): charmingly sung but spoilt by the distractions on stage.

It's a relief to return to Andrei Serban's production for Les Arts Florissants: modern but not earnest, with a first-rate cast including Patricia Petibon, Paul Agnew and Nathan Berg again as Huascar. And it's also a relief to move on to Aparté's new CD set of Zaïs, composed in 1748 and variously described as a ballet-héroïque and a pastorale-béroïque. Recorded at concerts given in the opera house at Versailles, this is an absolute winner. The story is essentially one of fidelity put to the test. Zaïs, king of the Sylphs, has disguised himself as a shepherd and successfully wooed Zélidie, a shepherdess. At the behest of Cupid he tells his friend Cindor to attempt to seduce her. Zélidie resists all temptation, even when Zaïs appears to be unfaithful; but she is appalled to find that her simple swain is one of the immortals. To keep her love, Zaïs renounces his power; whereupon Oromazès, king of the Genies, descends to restore Zaïs to his throne and grant immortality to Zélidie.

Oromazès reappears in Rameau's Zoroastre. Is he a representation of Ahura Mazda, the Zoroastrian God? In his note (the discs are enclosed in a CD-size hardback), Graham Sadler doesn't say; but he does write fascinatingly about the opera's references to Freemasonry, as evinced by Zélidie's ordeals and the idea of order out of chaos (the subject of the Prologue). The music is splendidly varied, as one expects from Rameau, with secco recitatives, airs, choruses and dances tumbling over one another. Right from his first appearance, Julian Prégardien is superb as Zaïs: free, natural delivery of the text with no sense of strain. Benoît Arnould is equally accomplished in the rather ambivalent role of Cindor, and Aimery

Lefèvre makes an authoritative Oromazès. Sandrine Piau is perfect as the much putupon Zélide, especially heartfelt in 'Coulez mes pleurs'. The sad repeated notes on the flute anticipate a 'Symphony' in Handel's *Theodora*, composed the following year. Les Talens Lyriques and the Namur Chamber Choir are exemplary. Christophe Rousset is so generous with repeats that it's odd to find a foreshortened reprise in Act 1 and two minuets cut from the Entr'acte after Act 3.

Graham Sadler was responsible for the new edition of Zais used for the recording. For **Anacréon**, Jonathan Williams is not only the editor but the conductor. It is not to be confused with the quite different 'Anacréon' that later formed part of Les surprises de l'Amour. This Anacréon was probably intended for another opéra-ballet, Les beaux jours de l'Amour, that was never completed; it was performed as a one-acter in 1754. The poet Anacreon, an old man, is happy to encourage the burgeoning affection that two of his followers feel for each other. He announces a forthcoming wedding and teases Chloé by letting her think that he intends to marry her himself. Dismayed, Chloé confesses her love to Batile in a scene built around two of Anacreon's poems. In the end, the poet joins the young lovers' hands and there is praise all round for Cupid and Bacchus.

The piece might not be a masterpiece but it contains many attractive features, such as Rameau's scoring for an orchestra that includes piccolos and high-flying horns. 'Mille fleurs' is another air for soprano and flute - two flutes in unison, in fact – with the violins providing the bass-line. Anna Dennis sings sweetly and tenderly, Agustín Prunell-Friend is yet another fine baute-contre, and the bass Matthew Brook is a benign Anacreon, perfectly comfortable at the top of his register. Jonathan Williams gets sprightly singing and playing from his Age of Enlightenment forces. Let's have lots more Rameau, a composer fully the equal of his contemporaries Bach and Handel. @

THE RECORDINGS



Rameau Les Indes galantes

Sols; Les Talens Lyriques / Rousset

Alpha (P) ALPHA710



Rameau Zaïs Sols; Les Talens Lyriques / Rousset Aparté (M) (3) AP109



Rameau Anacréon Sols; OAE / J Williams Signum (P) SIGCD402 does not love her ('Ah, crudel!'). Agilea's struggle to renounce Teseo despite the threats of her captor Medea ('Amarti si vorrei') has tragic intensity and is accompanied only by harpsichordist Jeanette Sorrell and cellist René Schiffer – it's probably the best single moment of the recital, so it is a pity that its libretto text has been missed out. I winced at some trivialities and errors in the booklet-note, such as an incorrect explanation of Handel's prologue Terpsicore added to the November 1734 revival of Il pastor fido but Sorrell's strategy to interleave four dances between clusters of arias is neatly effective. David Vickers

Mozart



The Orchestra of Classical Opera / Ian Page Signum (9) 2 SIGCD433 (117' • DDD • S/T/t)



Metastasio's serenata *Il re pastore* was devised for the domestic amusement of the

Habsburgs at Schönbrunn in 1751. It had already been set to music at least 14 times when an abridged and adapted version was set by the 19-year-old Mozart on the orders of the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg; its semi-staged production on April 23, 1775, was part of the entertainment provided during a visit by Archduke Maximilian (Joseph II's youngest brother). There have been some engaging recordings - Marriner (Philips), Harnoncourt (Teldec) and Wentz (Brilliant) - but it is hard to imagine hearing another performance as convivial and lifeaffirming as this. The Orchestra of Classical Opera play supremely well: each strand of the musical fabric in the concise 'Overtura' is delineated joyously (especially the shaded horns). Ian Page's unobtrusive pacing of the pastoral mini-drama and sage weighting of orchestrally accompanied recitatives pull the listener along gently, and each of Mozart's perfectly etched ritornellos is articulated with impeccable balance and shape. The continuo group of Steven Devine (harpsichord), Joseph Crouch (cello) and Cecelia Bruggemeyer (double bass) ensures that recitatives flow naturally.

The shepherd Aminta is brought to life scintillatingly by Sarah Fox: the superb cadenza at the close of 'Aer tranquillo e di sereni' conveys the humble dignity of the shepherd who does not yet know he is the rightful king of Sidon, and Fox's gorgeous singing in the rondò 'L'amerò, sarò costante' is matched by Matthew Truscott's tender violin obbligato and the orchestration of muted strings and pairs of flutes, cors anglais, horns and bassoons. Ailish Tynan's shepherdess Elisa sparkles sweetly, offering flawless technique and an endearing characterisation; the duet between Tynan and Fox at the end of Act 1 is the apogee of their characters' blissful giddiness ('Vanne a regnar, ben mio'). Anna Devin has a touch more steel in her characterisation of the disguised princess Tamiri, which means that all three soprano parts are sung with equal accomplishment but differentiated clearly. John Mark Ainsley's Alexander the Great dispatches florid lines masterfully; the magnanimous conqueror's description that storms and rainfall have given way to enlightened happiness ('Si spande al sole in faccia') inspires the tenor to peal out his freshest singing on record for years. Benjamin Hulett's performance as Alessandro's beleaguered ally Agenore steals the show in the anguished C minor soliloquy 'Sol può dir come si trova' a thrilling outburst of Sturm und Drang intensity that is probably Mozart's finest creation for a tenor voice before Idomeneo. **David Vickers**

Puccini

DVD 5



Manon Lescaut	
Kristīne Opolais sop	Manon Lescaut
Jonas Kaufmann ten	Des Grieux
Christopher Maltman bar	Lescaut
Maurizio Muraro bass	Geronte
Benjamin Hulett ten	Edmondo
Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House /	

Sir Antonio Pappano Stage director Jonathan Kent Video director Jonathan Haswell Sony Classical (F) 288875 10519-9;

F) ≥ 88875 10520-9 (131' + 16' • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS-HD MA5.0, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • O • S/s) Recorded live. June 2014



Whatever reservations you may have taken on board about the Royal Opera's carefully updated 2014 production of

Puccini's first real emotional shocker, do not pass up the chance to see the power and achievement of Jonas Kaufmann and Kristīne Opolais in the lead roles. Even in this day and age, to see (and hear) such uninhibited physical mastery of stage parts in opera is not so common - and everyone

from the artists themselves to the director, designers, and video director should be praised.

Designer Paul Brown has cunningly synthesised images from 20th- and 21st-century life to match (rather than equate to) the situations in which Manon and Des Grieux find themselves - a drive-in freeway motel-cum-gambling den in Act 1; a Japan sex-hotel room with voyeuristic mirrors, watch-through doors and wheelon aged perverts in Act 2; a point of embarkation at which a reality TV crew films girls in the sex trade being shipped overseas (with quiffed MC straight from an adults' version of *The Slammer*) in Act 3; and a fragment of abandoned freeway bridge (curiously almost a dead ringer for the set of Calixto Bieito's Parsifal) in Act 4.

On these Opolais and Kaufmann have the sort of continuous contact that many directors can only dream of getting from their principals. They can really sing it too, both pacing themselves well so as not to cheat on any of the full-throttle verismo demanded in the Act 2 duet - performed in intimately testing positions all over Geronte's bed – and Act 4 halfway up the proscenium on the motorway. Nor has the acting stopped with the singing here, whereas in some famous (perhaps more conventionally bel canto) old performances you might be hard pushed to know what each character was feeling.

Around them the support is terrifically sharp, the well-placed chorus included. Christopher Maltman makes much of Manon's vapid, insincere brother and even pulls off in context the reference to his sister going into a convent. In the pit Antonio Pappano is not only a master of style and of balancing the orchestral detail that should best emerge but is prepared fully to play the emotions of music that is already at the hottest point of extreme. Try the Intermezzo or the rolling swells of agony that open and close Act 4. It looks a tricky set and production to record and film from, but this release manages both well. Rivals in period costume from both the Metropolitan Opera and old Covent Garden exist but feel tame and cute in comparison. Mike Ashman

Puccini

DVD S

Turandot	
Mlada Khudoley sop	
Riccardo Massi ten	Calaf
Guanqun Yu sop	Liù
Andrè Schuen bar	Ping
Taylan Reinhard bar	Pang
Cosmin Ifrim ten	Pong
Michail Ryssov bass	Timur
Manuel von Senden ten	Emperor Altoum

Prague Philharmonic Choir; Bregenz Festival Choir; Vienna Symphony Orchestra / Paolo Carignani

Video director Felix Breisach C Major Entertainment (F) 22 731408: F) ≥ 731504 (125' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.0, DTS5.0 & PCM stereo • O • S/s)

Stage director Marco Arturo Marelli



A fantasy Peking is transported to Bregenz Festival's lakeside setting for Marco Arturo Marelli's new production

of *Turandot*. Terracotta Warriors, paper lanterns, Chinese dragons and a 72-metre curved Great Wall of China all contribute to a real sense of spectacle. The gruesome aspects of Gozzi's tale aren't neglected -Ping, Pang and Pong preserve and bottle heads of Turandot's victims and the Prince of Persia's body is dumped into the lake. A masked army of 'people's workers' populate the stage, while a strange Petrushka-like clown wafts about for no discernible purpose.

Marelli's big idea is that Calaf is Puccini, battling against composer's block at his piano in a dumb show until inspiration strikes and the brutal opening chords sound. He and Turandot clearly recognise each other during her first appearance. During Liù's torture scene, Calaf/Puccini is strapped to his bed, powerless to save her. Guanqun Yu's schoolgirl Liù, sporting beret and pigtails, is the pick of the cast. She delivers a beautifully affecting 'Tu che di gel sei cinta'. Given that Puccini died after composing Liù's death scene, unable to complete his opera, I wondered if the director was going to make something significant of this. Apparently not. A moving final scene follows, which is strange given that any sympathy for Calaf usually evaporates after Liù's death.

Riccardo Massi sings attractively as Calaf, with a very creditable 'Nessun dorma', though sometimes he seems disengaged, as well he might as the composer observing his characters. Mlada Khudoley's Turandot, sadly, is this performance's greatest weakness. 'In questa reggia' initially sounds lightweight and fluttery, but grows in both in wildness and volume (the singers are all miked, of course, in this open-air setting). Vocally, her riddle scene is a trial, the final duet a wobble-fest. Despite this significant drawback, though, an enjoyable staging. Mark Pullinger



The cast and conductor of the first instalment of Naxos's new Ring: Das Rheingold, recorded in concert in Hong Kong earlier this year

Wagner

Das Rheingold	
Matthias Goerne bar	Wotan
Oleksandr Pushniak bar	Donner
Charles Reid ten	Froh
Kim Begley ten	Loge
Kwangchul Youn bass	Fasolt
Stephen Milling bass	Fafner
Peter Sidhom bar	Alberich
David Cangelosi ten	Mime
Michelle DeYoung mez	
Anna Samuil sop	Freia
Deborah Humble mez	Erda
Eri Nakamura sop	Woglinde
Aurhelia Varak mez	Wellgunde
Hermine Haselböck mez	Flosshilde
Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra /	

Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra / Jaap van Zweden

Naxos Opera Classics ® ② 8 660374/5; ⊕ № NBD0049 (154' • DDD • 24-bit/96kHz • DTS-HD MA5.1 & PCM stereo • S) Recorded live at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre Concert Hall, January 22 & 24, 2015



Following a collection of historic Metropolitan Opera broadcasts and the

taking-over of the soundtracks from the four-director Stuttgart anniversary cycle,

Naxos now starts its third *Ring*. Taken from concerts by Jaap van Zweden's Hong Kong Philharmonic (there's Blu-ray Audio as well), this *Rheingold*, despite some effective casting and a rich-sounding natural balance, is a curate's egg of a performance.

On the plus side, the Hong Kong Philharmonic sound fully up for the occasion and have the stamina for this demanding piece. Van Zweden, in what is apparently quite a small hall, takes care never to cover his voices. He enjoys quieter passages - such as the colour and intricacy of Wagner's wind commentary in Loge's taunting of the gods' growing old, or Mime's narration – but is not always so sure-footed in the more heroic moments or the often vicious irony that governs the humour of this text. He also has a tendency to prepare for each new melodic idea or theme by holding back the end of the preceding music, as if delayed by an awkward page-turn in the score.

Matthias Goerne sings Wotan beautifully, with much baritonal sophistication, predictable (from an experienced Lieder recitalist) care for words and able negotiation of trickier moments. He is also capable of (and, unlike some other Wotans, willing to give voice to) genuine anger at his opponents. Unsurprisingly, at the beginning of his time with this role, not every aspect

of the character is yet fully in focus. The experienced Kim Begley (and van Zweden) likes to take Loge fast - authentic but a little short-changing of those moments of sarcasm so relished by past interpreters such as Windgassen and Emile Belcourt. Peter Sidhom enjoys himself greatly playing Alberich as an out-and-out 'baddie' with cackling laughter. The conductor's handling of Erda's intervention - too broken up in its phrasing to maintain a strong line of narrative - and the main giants' scenes - beautifully played but insufficiently forceful - does not wholly mesh with some able singing from Deborah Humble, Kwangchul Youn and Stephen Milling. The scene in Nibelheim does come off well. Here it feels as if David Cangelosi's Mime, both funny and moving without any kind of braying excess, has acted as catalyst to turn the occasion into a more full-on dramatic performance.

Overall this feels like a 'straight' concert reading of the piece from the conductor, which has influenced what we hear from the singers: some of the strong interpretative character that they all know how to offer is lacking. It's too early in the cycle for detailed comparisons. Nonetheless, I could not place this bargain issue as a single release above the usual pack leaders, or indeed the latest Rattle set (10/15). Mike Ashman

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

Sibelius celebrated

Anthony Collins's symphony cycle leads off a scintillating 11-disc set of early Sibelius recordings mined from the Decca archives

s Robert Layton says in an excellent note that accompanies this valuable set of Sibelius 'historicals', Anthony Collins's 1950s Sibelius symphony cycle - only the second ever made by a single conductor and orchestra - is 'remarkably faithful'. Remarkably well recorded too, excepting for some distant whirring tape noise in the First Symphony (you hear it elsewhere once or twice) and the odd questionable edit. The first three symphonies are truly marvellous, the playing mostly keen-edged, with wellchosen tempos and lacerating crescendos - those thundering timps really break through the texture, most notably in the First and Third Symphonies.

Collins knew how to pace a movement's evolving development: he does well with the Fourth and I like the way he keeps those doleful last moments on the move. The Fifth is again bracing yet sensitively balanced, the Sixth perhaps a little lacking in what I'd call 'white light', the Seventh in a sense of organic growth. There I think you'd need to return to his immediate

'Anthony Collins knew how to pace a movement's evolving development'

predecessor on disc, cycle-wise, Sixten Ehrling (Warner). But viewed as a whole, it's an exceedingly fine cycle, worthy to rank alongside Sir Adrian Boult's (almost) complete set of the tone-poems (Vanguard) and these fresh new transfers certainly do it justice. Not that Beulah's were less than good – and remember they have an excellent 'popular Sibelius' disc that includes Collins's HMV Sibelius recordings with the Royal Philharmonic, the highlight there being a superb *En saga*.

Mind you, Eduard van Beinum's recording of the same work with the Concertgebouw Orchestra (included here) is pretty impressive, especially from the Dutch brass. His Tapiola captures Sibelius's last masterpiece in all its varied weathers but there the palm surely has to go to the Berlin Philharmonic under Hans Rosbaud, a performance virtually without parallel, part of a disc (CD 8) that includes the Karelia Suite, one of three recordings of the work featured in the set and with an unusually broad Alla marcia finale. The other two versions are from Thomas Jensen and the Danish State Radio Symphony Orchestra (good but hardly exceptional) and Alexander Gibson with the LSO, which in terms of quality falls somewhere between the two. Gibson's (stereo) Sibelius Fifth is an honest-togoodness reading without mannerism but the LSO symphony recording that's truly a 'must have' acquisition is Pierre Monteux's imposing version of the Second (again in stereo), already reissued at least twice but an essential component in any Sibelius collection worthy of the name.

There are two performances of major works by the Danish State Radio Symphony Orchestra under Jensen, the Fifth Symphony (a marginally cleaner transfer than the one recently issued by Danacord) and the Lemminkainen Legends. Regarding the former, Layton's epithet 'eminently straightforward' just about sums it up, whereas the Legends are, I think, rather better than that, barring 'The Swan of Tuonela'; there, the available option of the identically paced Rosbaud highlights what's missing from the Jensen performance, namely intensity and mystery. Jensen's Fifth is preceded by one of the set's unquestionable highlights, Sibelius's wonderful Voces intimae Quartet played by

the Griller Quartet, a performance that probes way beneath the music's surface and 'bites' where needs be, much abetted by excellent if closely balanced mono sound.

As to the rest, two versions of the Violin Concerto are worth hearing: the Dutch violinist Jan Damen under van Beinum, securely musical but no match for the best, and a rather more vibrant (stereo) version by Ruggiero Ricci with Øivin Fjeldstad conducting, again nice to have but hardly Neveu, Heifetz, Oistrakh or Wicks.

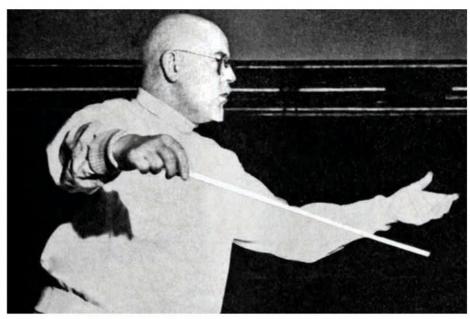
Of the various shorter orchestral works included (Finlandia turns up no fewer than four times), most worthy of note are some Pelleas and Melisande extracts, Pobjola's Daughter, the Karelia Overture and Night Ride and Sunrise under Collins. And there are the songs, two sequences of them (with some repertory duplications) featuring two of the finest Scandinavian divas of the last hundred or so years - Kirsten Flagstad (again under Fjeldstad) and Birgit Nilsson (under Bertil Bokstedt). The expansive Höstkväll ('Autumn Evening') is an obvious first port of call, and although Nilsson is at her heroic best you'll only have to hear Flagstad's first note and I guarantee that your spine will be aquiver. Even in 1958, by which time this great singer was in her early sixties, Flagstad still had the power to thrill. That track alone would be enough to justify the purchase of this set, but happily it doesn't need to be. There's so much more besides that you'll want to return to again and again.

THE RECORDING



Sibelius Great Performances **Various artists** Decca **③ ①** 478 8589DB11

94 GRAMOPHONE NOVEMBER 2015



Anthony Collins: the second conductor ever to record a complete Sibelius symphony cycle with one orchestra

Kogan in concertos

Considering the esteem in which he was once held, the great Soviet violinist **Leonid Kogan** appears to have fallen somewhere beneath the epicentre of great recorded instrumentalists. A pity, because his finest recordings are stunning. This particular coupling features a very weird transfer of a commercial recording and a fairly well-recorded (mono) live relay. The latter makes the disc more or less indispensible for fiddle buffs: Kogan on fire in the Brahms Concerto in 1958 (forget the odd excited scramble - it adds to the sense of spontaneity), with a monumentally assertive account of the orchestral score from the Boston Symphony under Pierre Monteux. Kogan can be serene, too, as he proves in his re-entry to the first movement after the cadenza and for most of the slow movement. It's not perfect, by any means, but that in a sense is part of its appeal. A 'performance' it certainly is, and the audience gives Kogan a colossal reception.

The Tchaikovsky Concerto is a different matter entirely, almost certainly a 1959 commercial recording where, although the solo playing is superb – and so is Constantin Silvestri's conducting (at least most of the time) – the sound, as transferred, is most odd. There's a whopping great edit at 12'12" into the first movement (just before Kogan's re-entry after the cadenza) and the orchestral image seems constantly to be oscillating between mono and stereo. Very good playing from the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra, though, and a lovely performance of the D minor 'Méditation'.

Well worth considering for the sake of Kogan but a flawed transfer production.

THE RECORDING



Brahms. Tchaikovsky Violin Concertos Kogan, Monteux, Silvestri Melodiya (F) MELCD100 2328

Tchaikovsky premieres

Guild's coupling of 'Tchaikovsky Premiere Recordings' is rather more consistent, sound-wise, even though we're talking shellac technology in 1940-41. These are the first complete recordings of the Second (*Little Russian*) and Third (*Polish*) Symphonies, although as Guild's excellent annotator Robert Matthew-Walker reminds us in the case of the *Polish*, the 'complete' tag glosses over a couple of small cuts. There Hans Kindler and the National SO do the honours: a very memorable performance, though the absence of the symphony's opening pizzicato chord is in some respects more annoying than the main 'body' cuts. Best are the second movement (especially Kindler's pungent handling of the Trio section, from 1'36") and the Andante elegiaco, as free and passionate a reading as you're ever likely to hear, definitely the Tchaikovsky of yesteryear.

As for the *Little Russian* with the Cincinnati Symphony under Eugene Goossens, the first movement's development isn't as well focused as it might have been (poor internal balancing doesn't help) and the *Scherzo* is rather sedate. It's a good rather than especially memorable

performance but within the space of a few years Beecham and the RPO (Sony) would do rather better. Theirs is the mono *Little Russian* that I would most heartily recommend. Generally excellent transfers.

THE RECORDING



Tchaikovsky Syms Nos 2 & 3 Goossens, Kindler Guild ® GHCD2422

Walter conducts Bruckner

There are various Bruno Walter versions of Bruckner's Ninth, all using the 1894 original version as edited by Alfred Orel - the earliest from 1946, running through 1948, 1950 (this first-release recording being the sole representative of that year), 1953, 1957 and, most famously though in some respects least effectively, the Sony commercial recording from 1959. I must just quote you an excerpt from Olin Downes's review of the actual concert in the New York Times (in turn quoted by Pristine): 'Mr Walter's performance of the Symphony is throughout luminous, devout, prophetic in spirit. The shining radiance of Bruckner's vision he catches with the rarest sensitiveness and intuitive approach.' Had he been describing a Bruckner performance under, say, Jochum, Giulini, Karajan or even Celibidache, I could happily have taken the words 'luminous' 'devout' and 'radiance' on board. But whenever I've heard Walter's Ninth the overall impression – certainly here – has been of intensity, urgency and a certain restlessness, even abruptness, especially in the first movement. The brass are dominant throughout, though the entire orchestra play extremely well. Surely Downes's description surely better fits Walter's stereo Sony recordings of the Fourth and Seventh Symphonies. It's a gripping performance that to my ears sidesteps the work's spiritual core, even in the third movement. Not sure either about tailing that serene slow movement with Till Eulenspiegel, an inferior recording though younger than the symphony by over four years. Another good performance, but surely it should have preceded the symphony as an opener rather than spoiling the Adagio's spell. Make sure to use your remote.

THE RECORDING



Strauss Till Eulenspiegel
New York PO / Walter
Pristine Audio (£) PASC446

Books



Edward Breen welcomes a new study of musical exoticism:

'Exoticism as explored by Locke ranges across a dazzling swathe of historical material from folk culture to the choruses of Handel'



David Gutman on a biography of 'malevolent muse' Alma Mahler:

It took Tom Lehrer's mid-Sixties satirical number to confirm her iconic status in the English-speaking world'

Music and the Exotic from the Renaissance to Mozart

By Ralph P Locke

Cambridge University Press, 471pp, HB, £84.99 ISBN: 978-1-10701-237-0



Ralph Locke's latest survey, *Music and the Exotic*, is essentially a prequel to his earlier

Musical Exoticism (2009). Venturing backwards in time, this new volume explores how portrayals of the exotic and Otherness – or, as cultural historians would have it, 'alterity' – operated in music before the *turquérie* of the late 18th century.

Despite shifting to earlier times, Locke retains his core concern for the completeness of musical performances. His study reaches beyond analysing harmonies or identifying folk-tune quotations; he considers as many facets of a performance as possible from costume, staging and instrumentation alongside social and political context. This approach he calls the "All the Music in Full Context" paradigm for studying musical - or music-assisted - representations of exotic Others' and contrasts it with the 'Exotic Style Only' paradigm more traditionally concerned with the contents of musical scores. And, as with Musical Exoticism, this broad view allows for ambitious but nuanced explorations characteristic of post-Edward Said scholarship. Exoticism as explored by Locke thus ranges across a dazzling swathe of historical material from the appropriated dance styles of folk culture to the choruses of Handel's Old Testament oratorios.

Yet this is no mere catalogue: it is the characterisation of exoticism and/ or otherness that lies at the heart of this book. Questions of why certain peoples ever gained the 'exotic' label are raised before Locke's focus rests on how this is conveyed by Western musical works. Interlaced here is the vexed question of how we interpret such works today. An example cited in the first chapter is a 2012 production by Washington National Opera of Mozart's Così fan tutte in which sets and costumes resituated the drama in a modern American suburb. Neapolitan army officers disguised as 'hippie biker dudes' rather than Albanians shifted Otherness away from uncomfortable 'Eastern' stereotypes but did little to explain the qualities Fiordiligi and Dorabella found so bewitching and intriguing in their new suitors.

One of the ways this book is set to become a staple for musicians interested in the field of orientalisms and exoticisms is Locke's careful categorisation of exotic characterisation. Untold years of research lie behind his sifting of musical examples into clear themes. Take, for instance, his notion of a continuum along which music can support an exoticised portrayal. This begins with a basic musical representation of a place or people through musical borrowing, either of instrumental sonority or through the appropriation of a musical style widely associated with that place, or those persons. This solid starting point most listeners can instantly map on to their own experience of a large portion of Western classical repertoire. But Locke then moves along through the notion of music as expressing qualities a character is exhibiting, which may in turn point up cultural stereotypes of that character, to the more complex idea that music – even when devoid of exotic style codes - can 'keep people attending to and interested in the exotic portrayals being laid out before them'. This last point is one that only becomes clear through the case studies, particularly of choruses by Handel. This is Locke's great strength as a writer and historian: what sounds so abstruse in theory is explored with such enjoyable relish in musical examples.

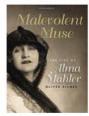
Locke argues carefully that Otherness is not necessarily a function of geographical distance, and in doing so includes portrayals of peoples seen as 'among us' but 'not us'. However, the backwardschronological extrapolation of this study suggests a search for a 'big bang' moment: the point at which a sense of Other began. At best this process is theoretical, akin to the calculation of absolute zero temperature. At worst it implies a *reductio ad absurdum*, an implication, for example, that during the first crusade blissfully naive Knight and Saracen experienced a 'me Tarzan, you Jane' moment. The knight stole a shawm, brought it back to Europe to play *estampies*, and modern-world problems were born. Locke doesn't say this, of course, but his chronology implies it.

Music and the Exotic from the Renaissance to Mozart is fascinating, entrancing and thoroughly enjoyable. Locke's survey and (re)evaluation of works from L'homme armé Masses of the 15th century to Mozart's portrayal of Osmin's rage in Die Entführung aus dem Serail is truly inspiring. The only problem readers will face is how to balance a compelling and enjoyable book with the need to constantly stop and listen afresh.

Edward Breen

Malevolent Muse

The Life of Alma Mahler By Oliver Hilmes; translated by Donald Arthur Northeastern University Press, 331 pp, HB, £29.00 ISBN: 978-1-55553-789-0



Alma Mahler-Werfel née Schindler (1879-1964) published her own ghostwritten and

sanitised memoir, And the Bridge is Love (Hutchinson: 1959), but it took Tom Lehrer's mid-Sixties satirical number to confirm her iconic status in the English-speaking world: 'Her lovers were many and varied / From the day she began her beguine. / There were three famous ones whom she married / And God knows how many between.' It was Alma herself who promoted the notion that a series of famous men sought to validate their claims to genius by association with her own supposedly suppressed and rechannelled muse. If you think the rules aren't still



Alma Mahler and Oskar Koskoschka, in a 1915 drawing by Kokoschka

different for men, ask why we hear so little about Gustav's affairs.

Malevolent is a loaded word and at first I feared the author might be some kind of prude. As it turns out, his original German title is Witwe im Wahn ('The delusional widow'); and where some biographers offer a full-throated defence of their subjects, Oliver Hilmes is determinedly downbeat. His German-language bestseller offers the most detailed examination yet of a woman whose relationships famously included the 'horribly ugly' Alexander von Zemlinsky and, more durably, Oskar Kokoschka, who kept a life-size doll of his former lover for erotic as well as artistic purposes. Alma went to the altar with paragons of music (Gustav Mahler), architecture (Walter Gropius) and literature (Franz Werfel). Many more sought an association with her, starting with Gustav Klimt when she was just 17.

An early mentor, Burgtheater director Max Burckhard, helped shape her Nietzschean attitudes but in 1901 she confided to her diary that she could not take her eyes off 'the round protuberance on the left side of B's trousers'.

Given her partiality for Jewish suitors, it is curious that Alma should have retained Burckhard's aggressive anti-Semitism. Hilmes invites us to condemn Alma without perhaps making it sufficiently clear that the virus affected even progressive artistic circles. Igor Stravinsky, who briefly embarked on a score for Hollywood's adaptation of Werfel's novel *The Song of Bernadette* in 1943, certainly wasn't immune.

How good is her surviving clutch of songs? Hilmes insists that she 'never got past the status of a gifted amateur', to which feminists will surely object, pointing out that women were not only denied the

vote but also the possibility of frequenting those social spaces where men find their calling and build careers.

That said, Alma could have resumed her compositional endeavours easily enough and her anecdotes have probably hoodwinked us all. Composers' wives often mould the way their husbands' legacies are perceived and Alma – boozy, capricious, easily bored – was uniquely addicted to self-serving fabrication. Previewing Bruno Walter's Mahler monograph, she was distressed at having been ignored: 'This wound to my ego ruined my night,' her diary records. Of the 159 letters included in her own *Gustav Mahler: Memories and Letters* (J Murray: 1946), only 37 were published unedited.

Hilmes is at his best in relaying the story of Alma's switchback trajectory in the mid-1930s. Having hobnobbed with Austria's anti-democratic right (only partly an attempt to gain Mahler admittance to the Austro-German pantheon), she was ultimately forced to flee Vichy France on foot together with those she affected to despise. The death of her daughter Manon Gropius, immortalised in Berg's Violin Concerto, does seem to have caused her some grief, although she never referred to the earlier loss of her son. Anna Mahler, who outlived and outmarried her mother, treated her belated expressions of maternal affection as indicative of encroaching senility.

Riveted by Alma's 'malevolence', the book's reluctance to explain her complementary allure is, in the end, its undoing. Her Junoesque beauty is unpersuasively relayed by the photographs introducing each chapter (there are no glossy inserts). Nor is it obvious why she identified herself so completely as Mahler's widow. Contradictions persist. Failing and reclusive, she nonetheless attends Leonard Bernstein's Mahler concerts, presumably retaining her knack for nurturing cordial relations with the movers and shakers. Meanwhile, when diabetes strikes she declares it a 'Jewish disease' she couldn't possibly have. The mix of scholarship and hearsay doesn't always travel well. We are told what Alma is thinking when the writer can't actually know, and his translator struggles to find the right tone. On page 126 we are informed that 'When...Oskar Kokoschka checked back in, Alma's emotional state went completely off the rails' - there's no hotel involved and no train either.

Malevolent Muse turns this femme fatale into a dissolute monster, and there has to be more to her than that.

David Gutman

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Mark Pullinger and
David Gutman revisit
Mravinsky's extraordinary
1960 DG stereo recording of
Tchaikovsky's 'Pathétique' with
the Leningrad Philharmonic originally panned in Gramophone



Tchaikovsky

Symphony No 6, 'Pathétique' **Leningrad PO / Yevgeny Mravinsky**

DG ® ② 477 5911 (originally SLPM138659)
This is no more than an imitation, almost a caricature, of the superlative account of this symphony by the same artists that I have loved and enjoyed for nearly five years now. I have rarely undertaken so depressing a detailed comparison, one which confirmed at every point what I had already felt during the initial hearing. This is still a fine performance, make no mistake about that, but for a recorded *Pathétique*

that is no longer enough. The special quality which made Mravinsky's earlier account of the work so peculiarly exciting was the feeling throughout of edge-of-theseat spontaneity, the players themselves wild with excitement. Compare the great thunderclap moment in the first movement (bar 171) and the exciting *Allegro vivo* passage which follows. Not only is the dynamic contrast less, the whole passage has much less musical impact when there is no sense of expectancy beforehand as the *pianissimo* clarinet solo gets lower and dissolves into four bassoon notes and then

afterwards the *allegro* seems too feverishly fast instead of having a genuine urgency. In the second movement, the speed is faster than before and the unmarked slowing for the trio more extreme; in the finale the absence of tension is more marked than ever. I never dreamed to hear from these players so dry-eyed an account.

Those who want a stereo version I urgently ask to hear the Giulini, as exciting a performance as I know, yet one which shows that there is charm and indeed dignity in the work as well as full-blooded emotion. **Edward Greenfield** (11/61)

Mark Pullinger Mravinsky's stereo recording of the *Pathétique* Symphony with the Leningrad Philharmonic has been a cornerstone of my Tchaikovsky collection since I was a teenager; a blistering account in wide stereo sound, taped in the exotic wilds of Wembley Town Hall, London, in November 1960. I've heard nothing to equal it – recorded or live – since. Therefore, discovering Ted Greenfield's biting *Gramophone* review was a shock. He found it 'an imitation, almost a caricature' of Mravinsky's earlier (mono) recording. Was his assessment right? Have I been naive in revering this account for so long?

David Gutman EG's early contributions to the mag do tend to belie his avuncular image – this was, after all, the daily critic whose negative review gets cited as the reason Carlos Kleiber never returned to the LSO. I can see what he meant about Mravinsky's *Pathétique*, though I think he goes much too far. I'd attribute many of his reservations to the rather weird sonics because they bother me too. They're now saying that Mravinsky's stereo versions of the last three Tchaikovsky symphonies were started in

London and finished in Vienna, but there's no trace of a real acoustic. Everything is very 'in your face' as well as separated out (though not, I think, the violins), and if sessions for No 6 really did take place in the Musikverein, you'd never know it.

MP From Wembley to Wien! I suppose Deutsche Grammophon was trying to highlight the benefits of stereo with the wide definition. This brings certain advantages: I love how much double bass detail emerges, for instance. After the explosive allegro vivo outburst in the first movement (rehearsal marks G to H), the basses tear into the score, truly meeting Tchaikovsky's feroce instruction. The recording captures their agitated bass-line in the build-up to the march, while they come into their own in the harrowing closing bars.

Yes, it's 'in your face', but this, for me, serves Mravinsky's vision: a no-holds-barred account, reaching near hysteria.

DG The recording emphasises even more the intensely Russian or Soviet-Russian quality of the wind and brass! Once heard, never forgotten, and thrilling in its way, but

you can see why EG might have felt uneasy. Are we getting an insight into the sort of sound Tchaikovsky might have expected to hear? Or is the recording's very particular frenzy a product of Iron Curtain factors (limited access to decent instruments and reeds) as well as Mravinsky's paradoxical combination of intense discipline and emotional excess? EG seems to miss the fact that at the end of the first movement exposition the bassoon notes completing the downward clarinet arpeggio are taken, sensibly enough, by a bass clarinet. What price authenticity, and should we care? Or is that a red herring?

MP That Soviet woodwind and brass quality is something else! I recently heard the St Petersburg Philharmonic under Yuri Temirkanov at the Proms, and those rugged contours have been sandpapered away.

I think you're spot on about the frenzied quality of the playing. The Leningrad Phil and Mravinsky premiered five Shostakovich symphonies together (and they had given the first UK concert performance of No 8 just before this *Pathétique* recording), and they transfer much of that nervy, febrile



Mravinsky's 'Pathétique' bears witness to his 'paradoxical combination of intense discipline and emotional excess'

quality of Shostakovich's works to their Tchaikovsky. In that essence, this recording is very much 'of its time'...Comrade Tchaikovsky, if you will.

DG That's a bit questionable but I know what you mean. And whatever the difficulties involved, music really meant something to Soviet practitioners and their audiences. I doubt there'll ever be a more intense rendering of passages like the first movement development (though I feel the lack of a certain something in what precedes it, perhaps because of the limited dynamic range that EG mentions). The march is a fabulous vehicle for Mravinsky's band but it's no longer particularly striking on grounds of sheer speed. Mikhail Pletnev's first version is certainly faster, if lighter in mood. And there are ways of looking at the piece which weren't there in 1960. I don't know if we want to get into that!

MP The tempo for the march is lively, although I think the clipped articulation can make it seem faster than it actually is. Pletnev's first version flutters along on gossamer wings (he's marginally slowed on his Pentatone recording – his third!), but I find Mravinsky's strict, no-nonsense approach more exciting. The lacerating brass and the hollow tone of the Leningrad clarinets make Mravinsky's interpretation a thrilling ride.

And what about the 5/4 waltz? EG is quite wrong to state that 'the speed is faster than before and the unmarked slowing for the trio more extreme'. Movement times are identical, and Mravinsky takes 2'31" for the trio section each time. So what made it seem slower second time around?

DG You're more familiar with the earlier version than I am. As I hear it, Mravinsky avoids too much easy charm in the 'waltz' and sees something rather dark and consequential in its subsidiary material, however much he's actually slowing down.

MP Where the mono version favours the strings, the stereo recording allows the woodwinds and brass more focus, which helps darken the mood.

Do you detect 'an absence of tension' in the finale? I welcome the lack of mawkishness at Mravinsky's tempo, where other conductors wallow. Perhaps this makes his account more 'dry-eyed' than most, but there's plenty of tension, especially in the Leningrad brass contributions.

DG I can't say I do. And the playing is pretty sensational, too, unless you're allergic to those 'buzz saws'. My reservations are rather different. Mravinsky's Tchaikovsky comes across as a man of the stage and (if you're not in the mood) a bit of a

CLASSICS RECONSIDERED

drama queen. Whatever its biographical context, the finale is also the ultimate demonstration of a symphonist's willingness to overturn time-honoured structural formulae. The 'defeat' is a triumph of original thinking, the logical outcome of the pattern of fateful descending scales permeating the entire score. I find myself responding just as much to performances that give the argument a bit more room to breathe. You said you've heard nothing to equal Mravinsky (and I'll agree that he's in a class of his own), but does slower have to mean self-indulgent?

MP Not necessarily. Valery Gergiev's Kirov Orchestra recording (Philips, 1995) maintains tension in the finale across its 11'39" span. But at 12', I find Temirkanov's St Petersburg Philharmonic too slow. The final movement of Bernstein's New York Philharmonic account, though, runs to nearly 17'. Now, that's self-indulgent!

DG Is Bernstein any slower than Celibidache or Mikko Franck, or is he just higher profile? Still, I don't suppose many listeners would want to repeat that kind of experience too often. My own favourite finale clocks in at 10'40" (nearly a minute slower than Mravinsky's 9'46") – I've just checked. It's from a Giulini LP with the Philharmonia Orchestra, marginally predating the Mravinsky but sounding more natural in the old Kingsway Hall in London.

MP EG also admired the 'dignity' in Giulini's finale.

DG No one matches the elevated quality of the resignation they find at the end. Which is not to say that I'm going to discard Mravinsky any time soon: Giulini's march sounds stodgy today, Mravinsky's anything but! After incendiary playing like that, how could anyone dare deny his recording its classic status?

MP 'Incendiary' is just the right word - this is a recording that catches fire so early in the first movement, I'm gripped each time I listen. I (guiltily) enjoy the stereo sound picture, which spotlights the utterly distinctive Soviet-Russian quality of the Leningrad Phil. Yes, there are disadvantages - whining horns, queasy oboe - but the frenetic energy and snarling hysteria that Mravinsky draws from his players are still capable of shredding nerves. The Pathétique contains deeply personal, deeply troubling music; this DG recording may prove too theatrical for some, but it gnaws away at my soul like no other. 6

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

English music of remembrance

November is a time for remembrance, when we pay tribute to those who have fought for our freedom. **Geraint Lewis** offers a guide to 10 works by English composers that are filled with the spirit of mourning

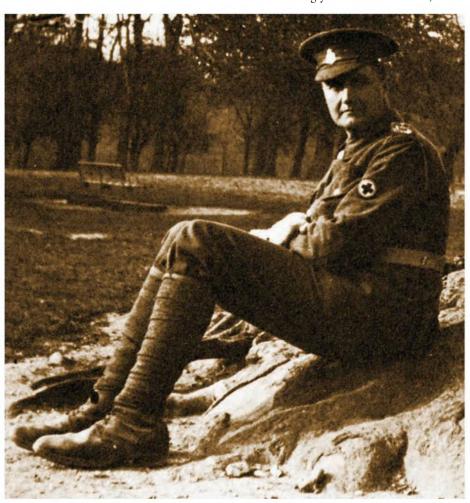
t 10.30 on the Sunday morning nearest November 11 the heart of London stands briefly in silence – until massed military bands in Whitehall begin to perform some mournful-sounding music as they face the Cenotaph in anticipation of the Queen's arrival on the dot of Big Ben chiming 11 o'clock and the two minutes' silence to mark the Armistice of 1918. The music never varies from

year to year and has become enshrined in memory: 'Nimrod', Dido's Lament, Solemn Melody...some of the pieces may be technically more suited to the occasion than others, but they are all there for a reason. This is the music of remembrance as the nation salutes its Glorious Dead of two world wars and other more recent battles and campaigns. With threats of terror seemingly as close now as ever, the

event carries a frisson of quiet bravery, just as the centenary of the Great War of 1914-18 and the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second in 1945 bring renewed relevance and increasing poignancy to the never-changing act of commemoration, especially as the remaining survivors grow fewer and frailer.

The role of music in memorial is as old as the hills (even when it was more 'sound' than 'music') and burial rites from countless ancient civilisations show signs of musical performance in visual images preserved in many forms. The keening of bagpipes at the late Queen Mother's funeral procession to Westminster Abbey in 2002 sounded an unforgettably atavistic note, as if coming from centuries past, and the shiver-downthe-spine when bugles sing out 'Reveille' and the Last Post in the chilly November air must surely relate to an ancient collective memory of ritual. But English composers down the generations have shown a particular genius for writing music of remembrance for all sorts of reasons or occasions, as this selection of 10 notable examples hopes to demonstrate. Some are personal, others public; some religious, others atheistic; some by soldiers, others by pacifists. They all confront the immutable nature of death, even if their certainty in an afterlife, or lack of such, is naturally contingent on faith or its absence.

Composers have sometimes movingly remembered each other – Byrd singing an elegy for his great teacher Tallis, and Blow, tragically, to his brilliant pupil Purcell. And some were more self-conscious than others – Sir Henry Walford Davies, as Master of the King's Musick, allegedly once said to Vaughan Williams: 'I don't know about you Ralph, but I wrote Solemn Melody on my knees'...'Dear oh dear, well I'm afraid I wrote the Sixth Symphony on my behind.' Each to his own!



Vaughan Williams: served as a wagon orderly with the Royal Army Medical Corps and as an artillery officer in France



Tomkins
When David heard
that Absalom was slain
Choir of St John's
College, Cambridge /

Andrew Nethsingha

Chandos Chaconne (F) CHANO804 (10/14)

King James I was heartbroken when his eldest son Henry died unexpectedly in 1612. Thomas Tomkins of Worcester was a distinguished member of the Chapel Royal and it is thought that he, along with others at the time, turned to the Book of Samuel to mirror a biblical king's overpowering grief. This superb recent recording captures the plangent pathos of the music to perfection.



Purcell
O dive custos
Auriacae domus
James Bowman,
Michael Chance countertens

The King's Consort / Robert King Hyperion Helios ® CDH55447 (7/88^R)

Purcell's glorious music for the ceremonial funeral of Queen Mary II in 1695 conveys the genuine outpouring of the public's sorrow within the unforgettable formality of a state occasion. But for the more intimate private mourning of the court he wrote this heart-stopping encapsulation of personal emotion for two voices, viol and organ. Bowman and Chance are a dream team.



Parry
The Glories of Our
Blood and State
BBC National Chorus
and Orchestra of Wales /

Neeme Järvi Chandos (F) CHAN10740 (12/12) Written for the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival of 1883, this 'Funeral Ode' masks a family's very private grief. Parry's eldest brother had been sent in disgrace to Australia, where he died just as this elegiac score was being completed. It stirred the undergraduate Adrian Boult at Oxford in 1908 but wasn't recorded until 2012. This eloquent account brings a long-neglected Victorian masterpiece back to resplendent life.



Elgar
Symphony No 2
BBC SO / Adrian Boult
ICA Classics (F)
ICAC5106 (12/13)

Elgar offered to write a march for the funeral of Edward VII in 1910 but time was too scarce. He was soon embarked, however, on a new symphony and there can surely be no doubt that the loss of a beloved monarch stirred a deeply felt response in this work dedicated to his memory. Boult first conducted the work in 1920 to Elgar's great approval, and this is his final account from the 1977 Proms, his last season there, when he was aged 88.



Vaughan Williams
Dona nobis pacem
The Bach Choir; Bournemouth
Symphony Orchestra / David
Hill Naxos ® 8 572424 (5/10)

At the heart of this plea for peace written in 1936, RVW wove seamlessly a setting of a Walt Whitman poem which he'd sketched in 1912 but shelved. With his own vivid wartime experiences in France in mind, it seems uncanny that he could then return to this overpowering vision of a scene from the American Civil War just as if he'd been there himself. Vaughan Williams was once Music Director of The Bach Choir and this recording shows them on top form.



Howells Take him, earth, for cherishing Choir of St John's College, Cambridge / Christopher

Robinson Naxos ® 8 554659

As the composer who had created a new post-war musical language for the Anglican Church it was entirely fitting that its American branch should turn to Herbert Howells for a motet to mark the loss of JFK in 1963. Howells never fully recovered from the death of his son in 1935, and the result conveyed a raw grief captured within the dignity of repose. A moving performance from the college where Howells was wartime organist.



Blatchly For the Fallen Choristers of St Paul's Cathedral; City of London Sinfonia / John Scott

Classics for Pleasure © 569620-2

There are many settings of Laurence Binyon's Great War words, the greatest of which is by Elgar as the concluding panel of *The Spirit of England*. But for the Royal Albert Hall's Festival of Remembrance in 1980, former chorister Mark Blatchly wrote this unforgettable version for the Boys of St Paul's Cathedral, who recorded it in 1990 under John Scott with a memorable contribution from trumpeter Crispian Steele-Perkins.



Tippett
The Mask of Time Hiroshima, mon amour
Sols; BBC Symphony Chorus &
Orchestra / Andrew Davis

EMI / Warner Classics (£) 747705-8 (5/87)
The crux of Tippett's Ascent of Man 'oratorio' comes as the mechanical representation of inhuman warfare on brass and percussion gives way to unaccompanied voices singing in remembrance. It is as if he's saying that out of our 'season in hell' comes a need to sing for those who cannot now do so themselves. This is the only recording of this astonishing work, and is now out of the catalogue and hard to find.



Tavener
Song for Athene
Westminster Abbey Choir /
Martin Neary Sony Classical
© SK66613 (12/95)

Here is a private response to the tragic death of a personal friend, Athene Hariades. In an age of such superficial musical simplicity, Tavener was virtually alone in writing music of *profound* simplicity. This recording from Westminster Abbey was made in 1994 and itself contributed to the selection of the work by Prince Charles for the funeral in 1997 of Diana, Princess of Wales, when the music accompanied the carrying of her coffin in procession to the Abbey's Great West Door.



Britten

War Requiem - Agnus Dei Sols; The Bach Choir, Melos Ens, LSO & Chorus / Benjamin Britten Decca **(F)** ② (2 CDs + ♠ 478 5433DX3 (remastered 2013)

No single work captured Britain's post-war cultural imagination more grippingly than the *War Requiem* which Britten wrote for the opening of Coventry's new cathedral in 1962. It is an achievement of transcendent reach in which the composer daringly undermines the very pillars of the church's liturgical act of committal by the puncturing inclusion of nine iconic war poems by Wilfred Owen. With the

canny power of understatement, this movement interleaves the *Agnus Dei* with 'A Calvary near the Ancre'. Britten humanises Christ throughout the score as if He were one of Owen's soldiers, and in so doing effectively skewers the institution of formal religion – without uttering a word of his own. His 1963 recording with the searing sensitivity of his tenor Peter Pears has never been surpassed.

PHOTOGRAPHY: LEBRECHT MUSIC AND ARTS PHOTO LIBRARY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Weber's Konzertstück in F minor

Having long fallen out of favour, this work is best appreciated without reference to the story of its first hearing believes **Jeremy Nicholas**, who delves into a mixed bag of recordings and retrieves some real gems

wo eminent commentators of an earlier generation had something to say about Carl Maria von Weber's Konzertstück. Albert Lockwood, in his Notes on the Literature of the Piano (1940), said: 'The Concertstück, grand old stand-by that it is, still occasionally makes a brave showing. It is interesting to recall that it was the first piece of its type, and that Mendelssohn was so entranced by it that he copied its form fairly literally in his Capriccio brilliant, Op 22.' (The 12-year-old Mendelssohn almost certainly attended the premiere of Weber's work, and he first played it himself in the same concert at which his Midsummer Night's Dream Overture was premiered.)

In *The Literature of the Piano* (1950), Ernest Hutcheson, having passed peremptorily over Weber's two piano concertos, finds that although the *Konzertstück* is now 'irretrievably hackneyed, [it] long occupied a foremost place in the pianist's repertory and was a necessary part of every ambitious student's education. Much may still be learned from it, for it is a model of bravura style and a historical landmark.'

Indeed it is. With Spohr's Violin Concerto No 8 ('in Form einer Gesangszene') of 1816, Weber's *Konzertstück* Op 79 is one of the earliest examples of a continuous concerto design. Later, Mendelssohn, Schumann and, most successfully, Liszt developed the concept. But this 'grand old stand-by' has now been stood down, no longer 'irretrievably hackneyed' for it has fully fallen out of favour. Look no further

than its history at the BBC Proms – a regular visitor from the early years until the 1940s but not invited back for the past quarter of a century.

THE KONZERTSTÜCK'S STRUCTURE

A brief road map of the work, then. It is a fantasia in four continuous movements (560 bars) linked by short transitional passages: 1. Larghetto affetuoso in F minor; 2. Allegro passionato in F minor, after which five plaintive adagio bars from the solo bassoon lead directly to 3. a march in C major for the orchestra (except for a solitary glissando of the soloist); this, too, subsides, followed after a sinister drum roll by a 21-bar piano solo (più mosso) marked con molto agitazione, ending in a topmost E trill (ff), launching into 4. finale in F major, Presto giojoso (con molto fuoco e leggierezza).

It began as a projected third piano concerto, which we first learn of in a letter dated March 1815 from Weber to a friend: 'A sort of story has taken hold of me. It will serve to link the movements together and determine their character in detail, as it were, dramatically.' But Weber was hesitant about the concept of what we now call programme music, conveying emotional states and writing imitative tone-painting. He set the piece aside and did not return to it for six years.

Resuming work on it in February 1821, he eventually completed the *Konzertstück* on June 18, the day on which he was due to conduct the premiere of *Der Freischütz*. That very morning he played through the *Konzertstück* for his wife and his young

German pupil Julius Benedict. As he played, Weber provided a commentary on the music which Benedict noted down from memory afterwards: a lady longing for the return of her Crusader husband, summoning fearful visions of his death in battle, hearing the triumphant army return to be safely reunited with her love. This would suggest that Weber had relented over giving his music a specific programme, but he never published this pianistic *scena* or gave it his public approval.

Personally, I think it a pity that this revolutionary work has become so attached to this second-hand narrative. It detracts from Weber's achievement. The *Konzertstück* is best appreciated without reference to it, relished as a proto-Romantic creation, the link between the piano concertos of Beethoven and those of Moscheles, Chopin, Mendelssohn and Liszt.

THE ESSENCE OF WEBER

Before we embark on our trawl through the available recordings, it is worth recalling what Lockwood had to say about playing Weber's piano music in general, thoughts that should be borne in mind when it comes to the most successful accounts of his Op 79: 'Pianists who want to enjoy Weber must be in the mood to welcome gaiety, even frivolity, and willing to be amused with obsolete elegancies and polished manners...In a serious mood one turns to some other composer for solace. But in this frivolity and light-heartedness much real beauty resides which is easily overlooked by the seeker after the "big" things.'



All these qualities are effortlessly to the fore in the first recording of the work that I heard. Luckily for me (and not only because it was cheap - second-hand), this was Maria Littauer with the Hamburg Symphony conducted by Siegfried Köhler, on a 1971 Turnabout LP reissued on Carlton Classics in 1996. The sound is analogue-cosy rather than digital-clinical, and while the Hamburg strings may not be those of the Vienna Philharmonic, it hardly matters when the spirit of the music is so convincingly conveyed. Littauer and Köhler give careful attention to all dynamic and expression markings, none of them laboured. This is music that Littauer had clearly had in her fingers for some time.

This remained my favourite version of Op 79 for many years and still retains my affection. So how do the recordings of big-name pianists compare? Will there be any I have yet to hear that will supplant Littauer in my affections?

EARLY VERSIONS

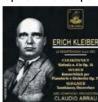
The earliest commercial recording I've come across is by Robert Casadesus (1899-1972) and an orchestra conducted by Eugène Bigot in Studio Albert, Paris, on June 6, 1935 (Columbia LX470/1, 3/36), reissued on a Dante CD (HPC081) but now no longer available. In lieu of this, there is a live broadcast of Casadesus with the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra and John Barbirolli captured in Carnegie Hall in November the following year. This is among the fastest (15'09") available, though nothing seems rushed in Casadesus's light-fingered passagework, enhanced by one of the masters of concerto accompaniment. Sadly, tape print-through and the energetic expectorations of the New York audience make it hors de combat. In acceptable 1952 mono sound (though the piano is less than ideally voiced) is a second studio account, once highly regarded, from Casadesus with George Szell and the Cleveland Orchestra. For all Szell's merits, here he is too much the severe bandmaster for his charming soloist. Another live performance from this era

BEST HISTORICAL

Claudio Arrau / Erich Kleiber

Music & Arts mono (F) CD1174

One of the most ardent champions of Weber's Op 79 is here captured live in New York on



December 20, 1947, with the NBC SO. It's more vertiginous than his later studio recording, less frantic and in better sound than his other live versions from this period.



Young Mendelssohn: 'entranced' by Konzertstück

is on the Guild label (its provenance not stated): a 1939 broadcast with the Concertgebouw Orchestra and Pierre Monteux. The soloist is Monteux's lifelong friend the Hungarian Lili Kraus (1903-86), more associated with Beethoven and Bartók. Her espousal of the Konzertstück was perhaps inspired by her teacher Artur Schnabel who, according to the hypercritical Claudio Arrau, used to play it 'brilliantly'. And so does Kraus, but – though the sound quality is remarkably good for an off-air recording of that vintage – with chalky string tone and much piano detail obscured, we shall have to set it aside.

Talking of Claudio Arrau, the Konzertstück was a work that he played throughout his career. There are at least four alternative accounts currently available – two live, two studio. The earliest is with George Szell and the New York Philharmonic-Symphony captured in Carnegie Hall in March 1945. The opening section reveals what a refined and imaginative pianist Arrau was at this time, thinking in long paragraphs and (emphasised by the piano-favoured balance) leading from the front. The Allegro passionato pages, though, are rushed

BEST SOLO PIANO VERSION

Steven Mayer ASV (F) CDDCA783

Liszt's arrangement for solo piano remains faithful to the original (unlike his reworking for piano and orchestra). This scintillating



account features on Steven Mayer's 1991 disc 'Liszt vs Thalberg', a re-enactment of the two pianist-composers' celebrated musical 'duel', which took place in 1837. and taken at much the same tempo as the concluding Presto giojoso, while the più mosso passage after the march is horribly frantic. Much the same applies to his 1946 RCA Victor recording with the Chicago Symphony under Désiré Defauw's stolid accompaniment (he provides a particularly dull march). Recorded in a single threehour session with Strauss's Burleske (those were the days!), it is not a pleasant listen, despite Mark Obert-Thorn's best efforts for Naxos. A second live broadcast (the venue is not stated) from December 1947 is a different affair. The transfer from a lacquer disc is far superior, as are the orchestra (NBC SO) and conductor, the great Erich Kleiber. He must have had a word with Arrau, for the fast tempos are less hectic and the whole concept is more sensitive and musical - added to which, unlike Szell and Defauw, he is able to catch his soloist with precision in the tutti entries. By the time Arrau came to record the work in stereo with the superb Philharmonia Orchestra and Alceo Galliera in 1961, his interpretation had mellowed still further, despite a still less-than-clear solo più mosso section before the finale (Weber's con molto agitazione becomes istericamente). Others find more convincing ways of conveying this, and the march, again, is somewhat lacklustre. Should it be filed under EMI's Great Recordings of the Century series? I don't think so.

Roland Keller (b1949) may not have Arrau's tonal allure, being more of a hitter than a stroker, but at least you hear every note that Weber wrote with lucid definition. The piano in Vox's 1979 recording is well to the fore (though conductor Köhler gives due prominence to the woodwind) in a powerful, punchy performance coupled in its latest incarnation with Weber's two concertos, the Konzertstück by Robert Volkmann (with Jerome Rose as soloist) and five other works for piano and orchestra with Michael Ponti on the seventh volume of VoxBox's 'The Romantic Piano Concerto'.

BEST WEBER-FRIENDLY

Nikolai Demidenko / Charles Mackerras

Hyperion (F) CDA66729

This is an Op 79 to live with and return to - a performance of great integrity and no little



affection. Judicious tempos (and tempo relationships between sections) and a due regard for Weber's every request are surprisingly rare on disc.

DISAPPOINTMENTS

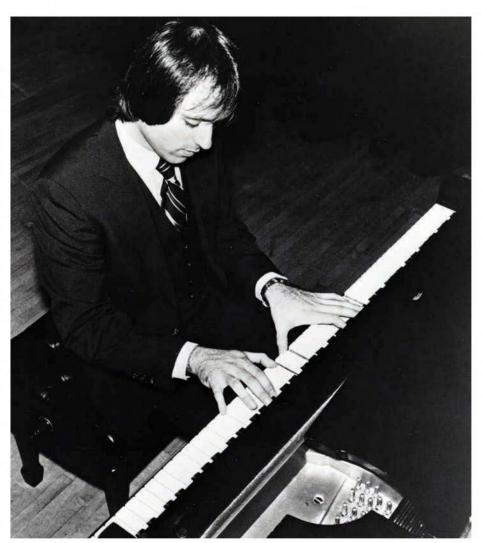
The most unexpected *Konzertstück* comes from the 18-year-old **Glenn Gould** in a 1951 live CBC broadcast with Ernest MacMillan and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Already spurning the Romantic repertoire, Gould only learnt the piece at the insistence of his teacher Alberto Guerrero. This is his one and only performance of Op 79. It's fast, furious, accurate and utterly charmless, but nevertheless a fascinating document of Gould when he was still a student.

Another disappointment comes from Friedrich Gulda. His 1956 Decca recording with the Vienna Philharmonic under Volkmar Andreae (now on Praga/Archipel) is neatly executed but strangely dry and formal. It never truly takes flight. Earl Wild, captured live in 1980, is predictably dazzling. His supreme technique gives him the freedom not to compromise on the difficulties imposed by Weber's wide stretch (the composer had abnormally long thumbs, and his left hand could encompass C-G-C-E with ease). Few pianists manage the rhythmic precision of the crotchet-quaver tenths in bars 82-84 of the finale quite like Wild. Sadly, the Florida Philharmonic Orchestra is a less-than-lovely outfit, the opening woodwind intonation is decidedly dodgy and the whole sound recording is far from ingratiating.

Georges Cziffra's 1978 account for EMI was made in the dry acoustic of Salle Garnier, Monte Carlo, one that doesn't exactly flatter the strings or woodwinds of that city's Orchestre National de l'Opéra. Unsurprisingly, Cziffra is thrilling whether it be in the delicate staccato runs in the Larghetto affetuoso or the rapid passagework of the finale, but he quite ignores the semiquaver and quaver rests during the piano's first statement of the opening theme (con duolo e ben tenuto la melodia), and his son György Cziffra Jnr provides only generalised orchestral detail.

On the other hand, Colin Davis with the LSO provides one of the finest accompaniments, in a 1965 recording for Philips. You hear the march in the distance and then the band suddenly rounds the bend, as it were, bursting into life with a tremendous swagger. If only the soloist, **Nikita Magaloff** – with a strangely muted piano – were half as lively and observant of Weber's dynamics (in the opening pages he completely fails to observe *f* and *p* markings) and less indifferent to the musical drama.

'Satisfying' is how one might describe **Peter Rösel**'s 1984 account for EMI (now on a useful, if sparsely filled, four-CD set of the piano and clarinet concertos,



'Tour de force': Steven Mayer's 1991 recording of Liszt's solo version is a clear top recommendation

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS		RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)		
1936	R Casadesus; New York Philh SO / Barbirolli	Apian (M) APR5601		
1939	Kraus; Concertgebouw Orch / Monteux	Guild ® GHCD2349; Audiophile ® APL101560		
1945	Arrau; New York Philh SO / Szell	West Hill Rad Archives M ② WHRA6037		
1946	Arrau; Chicago SO / Defauw	Naxos ® 8 111263; Documents ® ® 233198 (8/48 ^R)		
1947	Arrau; NBC SO / E Kleiber	Andromeda (\$) (\$) ANDRCD5005; Music & Arts (\$) CD1174		
1951	Gould; Toronto SO / MacMillan	West Hill Rad Archives ® ⑦ WHRA6038		
1952	R Casadesus; Cleveland Orch / Szell	Urania M → SP4226; Naxos S → 80270		
1954	R Casadesus; Cologne RSO / Hubertus	Medici Masters (M) MM0102		
1956	Gulda; VPO / Andreae	Praga Digitals (E)		
1961	Arrau; Philh Orch / Galliera	EMI (\$) (2) 918432-2 (5/61 ^R)		
1965	Magaloff; LSO / C Davis	Philips (S) (2) → 462 868-2PM2		
1971	Littauer; Hamburg SO / Köhler	Carlton (Ē) → 30371 0045-2 (8/73 ^R)		
1978	Cziffra; Monte Carlo Nat Op Orch / Cziffra Jnr	EMI (Ē) 762533-2		
1979	Brendel; LSO / Abbado	Decca (\$) (3) 478 6709DB3; (£) (3) 478 2638DH3 (3/86°)		
1979	Keller ; Berlin SO / Köhler	Vox (\$) (2) CDX5098		
1980	Wild; Florida PO / Newland	Ivory (Ē) 79001		
1984	Rösel; Staatskapelle Dresden / Blomstedt	Brilliant (\$) (4) 94698 (11/88 ^R)		
1988	Drewnowski; Polish RNSO / Wit	Arts M → 47288-2 (11/88 ^R ; 5/92 ^R)		
1991	Mayer [solo pf, arr Liszt]	ASV (F) CDDCA783 (12/92)		
1994	Demidenko; SCO / Mackerras	Hyperion (© CDA66729 (6/95)		
1994	Frith; RTÉ Sinfonietta / O'Duinn	Naxos ® 8 550959 (2/96)		
1996	Pletnev; Russian Nat Orch	DG (M) → 453 486-2GH (1/98)		
1998	Howard; Budapest SO / Rickenbacher [arr Liszt]	Hyperion (P) (2) CDA67403/4 (4/99)		

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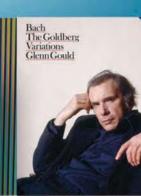
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AUDIO

symphonies and overtures from Brilliant Classics). You could not wish to hear the piano part more clearly executed (though he has to arpeggiate those cruel tenths in the finale). Herbert Blomstedt conducts the Staatskapelle Dresden (the city where Weber worked for the last period of his life and is buried) in a performance that, until the last pages, fails to set the pulse racing.

LISZT'S CHAMPIONSHIP

This survey would not be complete without mention of two other versions of Weber's Op 79, both by Franz Liszt. Such was his affection for the work that he arranged it for solo piano. Steven Mayer's 1991 ASV recording is a tour de force that grasps and elucidates Weber's narrative more clearly than many of the versions above. This is a clear top recommendation, rather than Leslie Howard's more prosaic performance on Volume 49 of his historic Liszt cycle on Hyperion. Howard is also the soloist in the orchestral version that Liszt made, in which he left the orchestral parts unchanged but offered an alternative text for some of the piano part. This is most noticeable in the march section where, after the glissando, Liszt brings in the piano to play the tune with the orchestra (most effective). Also, instead of the two famous octave glissandos in the finale, Liszt notates two double glissandos (not as effective in my opinion). Sadly, Karl Anton Rickenbacher's leaden accompaniment and Howard's surprisingly colourless playing make this no more than a curiosity – and a slow one at that (17'28").

OUTSTANDING ACCOUNTS

So, having dismissed so many owing to unacceptable sound, inert or lacklustre orchestral playing and soloists who either ignore Weber's precise notation or fail to capture the spirit of the piece, which are the outstanding accounts?

Attention to detail pays dividends in Benjamin Frith's 1994 recording with the RTÉ Sinfonietta conducted by Prionnsias O'Duinn. Listen to the variety of touch and tone he brings to the prescient Chopinesque figurations in the Larghetto affetuoso, followed by a steady, sensibly paced Allegro passionato, allowing us to hear everything that Weber wrote without loss of impetus or excitement. The soundscape for the alert RTÉ players is a little too boomy, but O'Duinn provides alert, characterful support. Marek Drewnowski's 1988 account with the Polish Radio National Symphony Orchestra under Antoni Wit is well worth hearing. The last section, a very dashing



'LIght-fingered insouciance': Robert Casadesus

affair, lightly pedalled and tossed off with aplomb, is exactly what is required, and this well-engineered disc, also featuring the two concertos, gives due prominence to the woodwind writing.

Pianistically, the most electrifying Konzertstück comes from Mikhail Pletnev in 1996 conducting the Russian National Orchestra from the keyboard. Even at the brisk tempos he takes, Pletnev is able to bring out in high definition parts of the piano writing that most others gloss over. Examples: the staccato demisemiquaver runs in the Larghetto affetuoso, wittily pointed, or the rapid crotchet/quaver left hand beneath the brillante runs in the coda. Such daring bravura can't fail to make you smile. However, he plays fast and loose with Weber's dynamics; the opening pages verge on the brusque; he adds octaves at various fermatas (bar 57 in the finale, for example); and he ends the two great glissandos with chords. Maverick (as you might expect) but stunning, as is the recorded sound and orchestral balance.

For a pianist with all of Pletnev's finesse and daring (but without the look-at-me aspect), turn to the 1994 recording with Nikolai Demidenko and Charles Mackerras made in the Usher Hall, Edinburgh. Although I slightly prefer DG's warmer, more resonant sound for Pletney, this Hyperion issue (Vol 10 in its Romantic Piano Concerto series, and including the two piano concertos) gives you everything that Weber asked for in an account that goes beyond mere respect for the score. The sweetly voiced woodwind in the Larghetto affetuoso and Allegro passionato sections, the pizzicato cellos in the march, and the brass figures in the finale are examples of the fine orchestral detail that Mackerras brings out. Demidenko is as

alert to the poetry as he is commanding in the pyrotechnics.

The opening pages of Alfred Brendel's 1979 recording with Abbado and the LSO are lovingly sculpted. The piano entry and restatement of the theme are beautifully poised, the skittering runs before the Allegro passionato section have exactly the right wistful, improvisatory air, Abbado lets the woodwind sing above the piano's bubbling semiquavers, and Brendel observes every accent and staccato marking in a way that few do. Likewise, few conductors in this piece catch their soloist, as Abbado does, with such unerring precision in the *tutti* entries. For those accustomed to the cool objectivity of Brendel, the finale uninhibited and exuberant but never superficially flashy - comes as a surprise, not least the great whoosh he gives to the two glissandos.

I was veering between Demidenko and Brendel as my top choice when a friend to whom I had mentioned this survey asked if I'd heard Robert Casadesus. Yes, yes, I said, and referred to the Bigot, Barbirolli and Szell recordings (above). No, no, said the friend - the 1954 studio recording with the Cologne Radio Symphony Orchestra. Who's the conductor? I asked. Romanus Hubertus, came the reply. Who? I asked sceptically. Well, dear reader, whatever benevolent genie was on hand on March 3, 1954, it made everything come together with all the performance attributes noted above but with some special distinctions. Casadesus plays the solo part with a light-fingered Gallic insouciance that immediately makes one think, 'This must be the kind of attack that Weber - with his light-action Brodmann piano – would have employed.' He shimmers and dances over the keyboard and brings to the score the one essential quality missing from Demidenko and Brendel: a smile. And Hubertus, in case you are worried about an unknown name, brings not only precision but also a wealth of detail to the orchestral playing without labouring the various points. This version was love at first hearing. @

BEST VERSION

Robert Casadesus / Romanus Hubertus

Medici Masters (M) MMO102

Casadesus and Hubertus adopt livelier tempos than most (15'15") yet nothing is rushed. Even



the most rapid passagework is crystal-clear. This has it all, with Lockwood's added requisite of 'frivolity and light-heartedness [and] much real beauty'.

PLAYLISTS

Explore music via our themed listening suggestions – and why not create your own too?

hree musicians – conductors
Hannu Lintu and Laurence
Equilbey and pianist James
Baillieu – share the music that they
listen to when they're not performing.

Beyond Sibelius

The conductor Hannu Lintu shares his passion for the music of his native Finland

The Jean Sibelius 150th anniversary has been celebrated almost everywhere in the world. Some of you might have had enough of these festivities and so I've made this playlist to remind you that although Sibelius occupied a unique position in Finnish music, and always will, interesting musical things have continued to happen in our country ever since.

The symphonies of Einojuhani Rautavaara and Joonas Kokkonen prove that Finnish composers did not stand traumatised in the maestro's shadow; they also drew inspiration from his works. Rautavaara's Third Symphony is a masterly blend of dodecaphony and Brucknerian pillars of sound, while Kokkonen with his simple musical language achieved infinite expressiveness. In the 1920s Väinö Raitio and Uuno Klami combined the Russian Expressionism and French influences with the Finnish mind-set.

Yrjö Kilpinen is not very familiar outside Finland, because he composed neither symphonies nor operas. His Lieder do, however, deserve to be more widely known; they have, after all, been frequently performed by such great singers as Martti Talvela and Jorma Hynninen.

The Four Dream Songs by Aulis Sallinen [see Contemporary Composer, page 70] are based on his Ratsumies ('The Horseman'), one of the best Finnish operas, sung here magnificently by Karita Mattila.

Jouni Kaipainen's *Carpe Diem* places the concept of the concerto in an interesting new light and Magnus Lindberg's *Aura* is a real contemporary symphony, a surprising hybrid encounter of symphonic poem and symphony. Jukka Tiensuu is an unsurpassed master of orchestral sound acrobatics, while Sebastian Fagerlund and his violin concerto inspire great optimism in the future.



Hannu Lintu's playlist shows that for Finnish music their is abundant life after Sibelius

- Sallinen Four Dream Songs
 Karita Mattila sop Lahti SO / Ulf Söderblom Finlandia
- Raitio The Swans
 Finnish RSO / Jukka-Pekka Saraste
 Onding
- Klami Whirls (Suites Nos 1 & 2) Lahti SO / Osmo Vänskä RIS
- Kilpinen Songs of the Fells
 Jorma Hynninen bar Ralf Gothóni pf
 Finlandia
- Kokkonen Symphony No 4
 Lahti SO / Ulf Söderblom
- Rautavaara Symphony No 3
 Helsinki PO / Leif Segerstam
 Ondine
- Kaipainen Carpe Diem (Clarinet Concerto)

Kari Kriikku *cl* Avanti! CO / Jukka-Pekka Saraste **Ondine**

- Lindberg Aura
 BBC SO / Oliver Knussen
 DG
- **Tiensuu Nemo**Avanti! CO / Susanna Mälkki
- Fagerlund Darkness in Light (Violin Concerto)

Pekka Kuusisto *vn* Finnish RSO / Hannu Lintu

BIS

Hannu Lintu's new recording of Mahler's Symphony No 1 with the Finnish RSO is released by Ondine this month

Chaos and Desolation

Conductor Laurence Equilbey, offers a playlist of music that sits at the heart of the Insula orchestra's repertoire

Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber: the five composers brought together by this playlist are particularly important to me. Partly, this is a matter of taste, but these composers are also at the heart of the repertoire of Insula orchestra, which I founded three years ago, a period-instrument orchestra specializing in the Classical and pre-Romantic periods. These extracts share a thematic idea: 'chaos and desolation'. It's a sombre proposition, certainly, but one that opens the door to a repertoire of incredible richness. In moments of chaos, all forms of musical expression are possible. Our connection with reality breaks down, the classical preoccupation with equilibrium and pulse dissolves and reveals rhetoric that is fantastical in the truest sense, drawn from the supernatural, the uncanny, the unheard, in a framework - a language - that is literally divine. This is the mad roar of the 'air des Furies', the fracas of the Dies irae, the diabolical energy of the scene in Weber's Wolf's glen.

In contrast with chaos, I also offer up music of utter desolation. To the searing heat of chaos, suspension alone answers. Time stops, giving way to incomprehension or woe: the woe of Orfeo mourning Eurydice, or Giunia from Lucio Silla, believing herself called by her deceased husband.

 Gluck Orfeo ed Euridice (Vienna version, 1762), Act 1 scene 1 - 'Ah, se intorno a quest'urna funestra'

Soloists; Accentus choir; Insula orchestra / Laurence Equilbey

Archiv Produktion

Gluck Orpheo (Paris version, 1774), Act 2 scene 1 - Air des Furies

Soloists; Accentus choir; Insula orchestra / Laurence Equilbey

Archiv Produktion

Mozart Requiem - III. Sequenz (Dies

Solists: Accentus choir: Insula orchestra / Laurence Equilbey

Naïve Classique

Warner Classics

Haydn The Seven Last Words -Introduction: Maestoso ed Adagio Soloists; Accentus choir; Akademie für alte Musik Berlin / Laurence Equilbey Naïve

Beethoven Egmont - Overture Chamber Orchestra of Europe / Nikolaus Harnoncourt

Beethoven Egmont - Clärchens Tod BPO / Herbert von Karajan

Beethoven Cantata on the Death of Joseph II, WoO87, - 'Tot, tot' Soloists; Chorus and Orchestra of the Deutsche Oper, Berlin / Christian Thielemann

Weber Der Freischütz - 'Milch des Mondes fiel auf Kraut' BPO / Nikolaus Harnoncourt Teldec

Mozart Lucio Silla, Act 3 -'Fra I pensier'

Soloists; Ars Nova; Danish Radio Sinfonietta / Adám Fischer Da Capo



Laurence Equilbey relishing emotional extremes

Haydn Die Schöpfung -Introduction 'Chaos'

VPO / Nikolaus Harnoncourt Teldec

Great musical partnerships

Pianist James Baillieu chooses 10 pieces that celebrate a very special musical chemistry

The great privilege of being an accompanist is having the opportunity to perform with a large variety of singers and instrumentalists. I'm fortunate to be an artist in residence at Wigmore Hall this year, and the next concert is with the countertenor Iestyn Davies and tenor Allan Clayton on December 4: a programme that includes the premiere of a specially commissioned work by Nico Muhly. I'm very much hoping that, like the theme for this playlist, the concept of a great musical partnership will be in evidence during the evening.

Here, however, I've started with Widmung, a wonderful song that was a wedding gift from Robert to Clara Schumann. More lovebirds fill my list in the form of Barenboim and du Pré performing Beethoven, followed by Britten and Pears performing one of Britten's moving Michelangelo sonnets.

I've chosen to celebrate a huge range from the immortal collaboration of Mozart and Da Ponte in Le nozze di Figaro, to the great musical tradition of the Gershwins' Porgy and Bess. Another great partnership, both on and off stage, was Sutherland and Bonynge, whose moving performance of 'Casta Diva' is a real treasure. Likewise, there is little beating the dream-team collaboration of Fischer-Dieskau and Moore in Schubert's Winterreise.

I simply could not resist Rogers and Hammerstein's 'Climb Every Mountain' to pick us back up from the depths of Schubert's winter and to top it off, 'A Word on My Ear' by Flanders and Swann, whose music has given us so many hours of laughter. Finally, we return to Beethoven and the epitome of musical partnerships in the great Takács Quartet. Their Beethoven recordings are among the most profound interpretations ever captured on disc and as an accompanist, I have the joy of simply sitting back and listening to them.

Schumann Widmung Felicity Lott sop Graham Johnson pf



James Baillieu gathers some perfect partnerships

- Beethoven Cello Sonata No 3 in A. Op 69 - Allegro ma non tanto Jacqueline du Pré vc Daniel Barenboim pf Warner Classics
- **Britten** Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo, Op 22 - Sonetto XXX Veggio co' bei vostri occhi un dolce lume Peter Pears ten Benjamin Britten pf Decca
- Mozart Le nozze di Figaro, Act 2 -'Signori, di fuori son già i suonatori' Kathleen Battle sop Thomas Allen bar Chorus of the Wiener Staatsoper; VPO / Riccardo Muti

Warner Classics

G & I Gershwin Porgy and Bess, Act 2, scene 2 - 'It Ain't Necessarily So' Ella Fitzgerald; Louis Armstrong Artwork/BNF Collection

- Bellini Norma, Act 1 'Casta Diva' Dame Joan Sutherland sop London Symphony Chorus, LSO / Richard Bonynge
- **Schubert** Winterreise Das Wirtshaus Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau bar Gerald Moore pf
- Rogers & Hammerstein The Sound of Music Peggy Wood

RCA

Flanders & Swann You'd Be Surprised: Songs of Love and Laughter - A Word on My Ear

Barbara Kennedy sop Peter Lockwood pf

Beethoven String Quartet No 11 in F minor, Op.95, 'Serioso' - Allegro assai vivace ma serioso

Takács Ouartet

Decca



The playlists for this feature were compiled in conjunction with

Qobuz, the music streaming service. You can listen to the playlists at gramophone.co.uk/playlists

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PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

From operas Lulu and Zazà to symphonic works like Sibelius's Symphony No 1 and Ravel's La valse, November is full of events to enjoy in person, on the radio, online and in cinemas

Royal Opera House, London & UK cinemas

Live screening of the Royal Ballet in Carlos Acosta's Carmen, November 12

Surely one of the must-see events in Covent Garden's calendar this season, this multi-work programme of ballet shorts concludes with Carmen, a new narrative work from acclaimed dancer Carlos Acosta. This new work uses the music and story of Bizet's opera in a new adaptation by Martin Yates that features the Royal Opera chorus and flamenco singing and also stars Acosta himself. Emmanuel Plasson conducts the first half of the programme, featuring Viscera (to a score by Lowell Liebermann), *Afternoon of a Faun* (Debussy) and Balanchine's Tchaikovsky pas de deux.

roh.org.uk; roh.org.uk/cinemas

Teatro Monumental, Madrid, & Spanish radio and TV, online at a later date

Maxim Rysanov performs with and conducts the RTVE Orquesta Sinfonica, November 13

Maxim Rysanov is principally known as a viola player. However, in recent years he has been combining his career as an instrumental soloist with that of conductor. This concert shows his versatility, featuring Mozart's Marriage of Figaro Overture, Prokofiev's Classical Symphony and Beethoven's Symphony No 7. There's also the chance to enjoy some more recent music in the form of the young British/Bulgarian composer Dobrinka Tabakova's 2006 Suite in Old Style for viola, string orchestra and harpsichord, which Rysanov will direct from the viola.

rtve.es

Bavarian State Opera, Munich, & online

Omer Meir Wellber conducts the Bavarian State Orchestra in Mefistofele, November 15

The Israeli conductor Omer Meir Wellber takes charge of a new production of Boito's Mefistofele for Bavarian State Opera, directed by Roland Schwab, and with a cast of top names. René Pape takes the title-role of Mephisto, alongside Joseph Calleja as Faust. Kristine Opolais sings the dual role of Margarete and Helena. The November 15 performance will be streamed live.

staatsoper.de; staatsoper.de/tv

The Maltings, Snape, & online

Aldeburgh Music's Big Sing Day, November 20 Aldeburgh Music's Big Sing Day at The

Maltings is a massed singing event which takes place each year to mark the climax of its



Metropolitan Opera, New York, & worldwide cinemas Live in HD

Berg's Lulu, November 21

This new production of Berg's Lulu, a co-production between the Met, English National Opera and Dutch National Opera, looks gold-plated in every way. Firstly, with William Kentridge as director it's likely to be a feast for both the eyes and the intellect. Then there's the fact that James Levine. an acclaimed interpreter of Berg's score, will conduct (he not only conducted the Met premiere of *Lulu* in 1977, but has returned to conduct 30 subsequent performances). The cast includes Marlis Petersen as Lulu and Susan Graham as Countess Geschwitz: the characters who fall for Lulu are sung by, among others, Daniel Brenna and Johan Reuter.

metopera.org;

metopera.org/season/in-cinemas

Big Sing Friday Afternoons strand, conceived in 2013 as part of the centenary celebrations for its founder. Benjamin Britten. The strand's initial aim was to encourage children and young people to sing, and it's certainly done that. This year's Big Sing features eight new songs which Nico Muhly has written for the project. Those who can't get there in person can watch it streamed live, but there's also the option of actually taking part remotely, which many schools across the world do (all the materials required to take part are available on the website).

fridavafternoonsmusic.co.uk

Royal Festival Hall, London, & BBC Radio 3

Susanna Mälkki's LPO debut, November 27 in concert, November 30 on BBC Radio 3 Susanna Mälkki was recently appointed Chief Conductor of the Helsinki Philharmonic, effective from the 2016/17 season. If you missed her UK visit over the summer at the BBC Proms, then this is your opportunity to catch her again as she makes her debut with the LPO. She opens with a high-impact work by Anatol Liadov: his terrifying tone-poem, From the Apocalypse. Next comes Prokofiev's virtuoso Piano Concerto No 2, performed by the Van Cliburn Competition's 2013 silver medallist (and recent Warner Classics signing) Beatrice Rana. The programme culminates with the music of Mälkki's compatriot Jean Sibelius - his Symphony No 1.

lpo.org.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Barbican, London, & BBC Radio 3 in 2016

Opera Rara in Leoncavallo's Zazà, November 27 Zazà, written by the composer of *Pagliacci*. was an immediate hit when it was premiered in Milan in 1900 but has since dropped out of the regular operatic repertoire. This concert staging directed by Susannah Waters (in Italian with English surtitles) therefore represents a rare opportunity for opera lovers to hear it live. The performance comes at the end of a week during which the cast will have been recording the opera for Opera Rara for release in 2016, and it will be this concert recording that BBC Radio 3 will then broadcast next year. The cast is headed up by Ermonela Jaho as Zazà and Riccardo Massi as Milio; Maurizo Benini conducts the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

barbican.org.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Philharmonie, Berlin, & online

Francois-Xavier Roth conducts the Berlin Philharmonic, December 1

General Music Director-designate of the city of Cologne, Roth makes his Berlin Philharmonic conducting debut with a programme that offers a diverse cross-section of three centuries of music from Roth's native France: Varèse's Ionisation for 13 percussionists, Lully's Suite from Le bourgeois gentilhomme, Debussy's Première Suite for orchestra. Ravel's La valse and Berlioz's Les nuits d'été with Anna Caterina Antonacci as the soprano soloist.

berlinerphilharmoniker.de/en; digitalconcerthall.com

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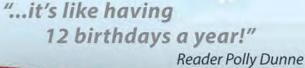
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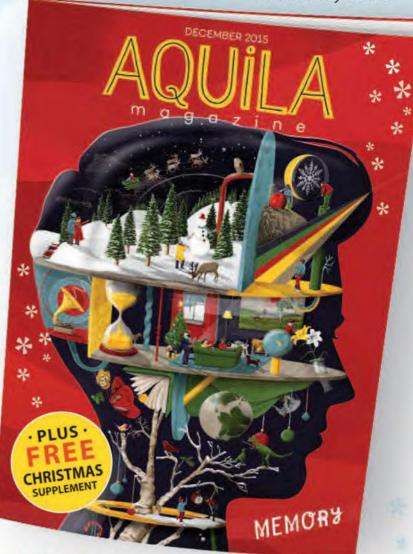
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AQUILA for Christmas

We can post the December issue with your gift message to arrive in time for Xmas. The festive package is stamped 'Open on 25th December', and posts from early December.

See sample online

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MONTH TEST DISCS



A truly reference-quality recording of Mahler 1 by the Utah Symphony under Thierry Fisher is a fine addition to the Fresh! DSD catalogue



Beautifully precise, and with added ambience in hi-res, this recording of the *Goldbergs* by Vogt sounds superb when played through a fine system

A busy time for new product launches

Technics expands its range, a classic amplifier revived, and a novel twist on loudspeakers



his is the traditional season for major hi-fi announcements: something to do with us all spending more time listening to music, I guess. And autumn 2015 is living up to expectations, with classic designs updated, new models and innovations.

One of the big announcements was the release of new models in the famous 800 Series from Bowers & Wilkins ①, widely used in studios for monitoring (see also this month's Audio Essay), but there have also been new additions to the Technics range, revived just over a year ago, and updated versions of Audiolab's classic 8000 series CD player and amplifier.

Technics has added to its range an all-inone system complete with speakers, to be called Ottava 2, and teased the prospect of its return to turntable manufacturing, with a model possibly on the way for 2016 3. It's also slotted in its new Grand Class G30 Series 4 between the reference-level R1 and C700 models announced earlier this year, with a novel combination of the SU-G30 Network Audio Amplifier, combining network player and amplification, and the ST-G30 Music Server, a CD ripper and storage solution.

The ST-G30 uses a replaceable SSD hard disk for music storage, and has both USB and Ethernet connectivity, while the

amplifier has both digital and analogue inputs including optical and electrical digital, USB, Ethernet and Wi-Fi, plus Bluetooth. Both new products will be on sale next spring.

More conventional is the new pairing from Audiolab, drawing on the designs of the company's respected 8000A amplifier, first launched in 1983, and 8000CD player: the 8300A (£900) and 8300CD (£1000) are now on sale in either silver or black 3. The 8300A delivers 75W per channel from its dual-mono power amp section, and like previous Audiolab amps can be switched for use as a standard amplifier, preamplifier or power amplifier. The new model sees the return of a high-quality MM/MC phono stage for turntable use, and there are also five line inputs.

The slot-loading player doubles as a digital-to-analogue converter, with both optical and coaxial digital inputs, plus an asynchronous USB connection able to handle files at up to 384kHz/32-bit as well as DSD, all converted using the widely-used ESS Sabre DAC, to which multiple digital filter options have been added. The 8300CD also has variable-level analogue outputs.

Linn is expanding its Exakt series with the arrival of three new Exaktbox products **6**, combining digital-to-analogue conversion with the company's

SPACE Optimisation+/digital crossover technology, enabling a Linn installer to set them up for optimal performance with a wide range of loudspeakers in any room. The first Exakt product in the company's entry-level Majik range is the £3950 Majik Exaktbox-I, which combines the processing with eight 100W amplifier channels, while the Akurate Exaktbox is now available in a £3500 six-way version, slotting in below the existing 10-way model. Completing the new line-up is the £1250 Exaktbox Sub, allowing subwoofers to be integrated into Linn Exakt systems.

The company is also launching two new speaker systems **7**, combining slimline column designs covered in fabric 'socks', and with built-in multichannel amplification to simplify the creation of a complete active Exakt system. Both the 530 System and the more compact 520 System have jewel-cut glass stands and top-plates, and are available in a choice of Linn Fabrik covers, including 11 plain colours and three weaves, with simple switching between covers when the user requires. With an eye to the company's heritage, the range will be joined by two new collections next year: Harris Tweed Hebrides and Timorous Beasties. The Linn 520 System speakers start from £9250, and the 530 models from £12,000. **G**

REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Quad Vena

Old meets new in an attractive amplifier solution

or many readers of a certain age, and those of us with a penchant for a taste of hi-fi's past, Quad is the classic British hi-fi name. It's hardly surprising, given that 2016 will mark 80 years since Peter Walker started the company in London as SP Fidelity Sound Systems, quickly changing the name to The Acoustical Manufacturing Co Ltd. Since then it has undergone a couple of changes of ownership, and a shift of manufacturing from Huntingdon (where it moved when it was bombed out of London in 1941) to the huge production plant of current owner IAG, in China.

I've confessed to a hankering for an old Quad pre/power amplifier, perhaps even with the partnering FM radio tuner, in these pages before - but having looked at more 33/303s and 44/405s than I care to remember, I'm yet to find exactly the set to get me reaching for the cash. And as for finding a pair of its first electrostatic speaker, the ESL57, in anything like original condition for sensible money, I fear I may be several decades too late.

I could, however, consider some of the modern Quad products, which include the re-created QII series, based on the original amplifier of the same name introduced in 1953, and the Elite models derived from the radical (for Quad) 77 Series of 1994 – I still remember attending the 77 launch event, and the tour of the factory, where we marvelled at the amount of handmade craftsmanship behind these hi-tech products.

And Quad keeps developing: on the stocks is the new Artera series, designed to bring Quad into the high-

QUAD VENA

Type Integrated amplifier Price from £600, £700 as tested

Output 45Wx2

Inputs Two line analogue, two optical and one coaxial digital, USB-A and USB-B, aptX Bluetooth

Outputs One pair of speakers, preamp output, optical and coaxial digital, headphones

Accessories supplied

Remote handset, Bluetooth antenna (only with standard Lancaster Grey version)

Dimensions (WxHxD) 31.3x9.35x30.2cm

quad-hifi.co.uk







'A very refined amplifier, both in the way it delivers the timbres, and in that it always sounds in control of what's being played'

resolution audio age: the Artera Play is a combined player/control unit complete with DSD capability, and a matching Artera Stereo power amplifier will also be available.

And then there's Vena. Launched last year, this is a compact integrated amplifier with styling clearly designed as a modern twist on the classic Quad look, notably that maintained in the current

QC Twenty Four preamplifier and Quad II Classic Integrated. You can even buy the amplifier wrapped in a selection of wooden sleeves, making use of the extensive cabinetry plant at IAG Central, of which more in a moment.

However, what's not so classic about Vena is its input provision: as well as the usual analogue inputs, of which there are two, it also has both coaxial and two optical digital inputs, plus two USB inputs - one to enable a computer to be connected, the other for iPods, iPhones and iPads. On top of which it also has aptX Bluetooth for wireless connection of suitable devices for audio playback we're quite a long way from those classic Quad valve amplifiers!

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Add these to make the most of the Vena's appealing sound

QUAD S1 SPEAKERS

The brand-new Quad S1 speakers look an ideal partner for the Vena, with ribbon tweeters and finishes to match the amplifier



MAC MINI

a smartphone or tablet

The ideal source for music played via the USB input is the compact Mac Mini computer. Control it with



As standard, the Vena comes in Lancaster Grey metal casework, selling for £600, while versions sleeved in piano gloss black or white, or the sapele mahogany of the review sample, attract a £100 premium. Incidentally the sleeve finishes match those of the company's new S series loudspeakers, which start at £600 for the S1 standmount/bookshelf model.

The 'standard' metal-cased version of the Vena comes with a Bluetooth antenna to screw into a rear-panel terminal, simply because the aluminium casework shields the internal Bluetooth receiver; on the 'sleeved' versions no external antenna is required.

The fascia design has definite echoes of those Quads of old, with its single volume control situated to the right, beside a line of buttons to select inputs, each with its own LED indicator builtin. It's a pleasingly simple layout, backed up with an equally uncluttered remote handset, with buttons for input selection, volume, muting and power on/standby. Small the remote may be, but it's well-finished in metal to match the front-panel of the amplifier.

The USB input can accept files at up to 24-bit/192kHz, which are handled by the widely-used Cirrus Logic CS4398 24-bit DAC, also found in the company's flagship Platinum CD player, while the onboard amplification uses conventional Class AB topology rather than the increasingly popular Class D, Quad explaining the choice was made because this design allows 'richer musicality than similarly priced Class D amplifiers can muster'.

The power amplifier section delivers 45W per channel into 80hms, and the amplifier also has a high-quality headphone stage and preamp-level output sockets to allow it to be connected to an external power amplifier or active speakers.

PERFORMANCE

Just as the design of the Vena both harks back to classic Quad designs while still being very modern, so its sound is some way from the way the Quad sound is often (mistakenly) stereotyped: this is no soft and cuddly amplifier, but one with much more spark and vitality about it.

Yes, there's warmth in the bass, giving it a lovely generosity unusual in this kind of mini-amplifier, but it's not achieved at the expense of definition or resolution: it's full and rich rather than in any way slow or ploddy, and really brings out the scale of everything from a full orchestra to a well-recorded grand piano, without any sense of things being overplayed or softened.

Whether used with my desktop
Neat Iotas or the considerably weightier
PMC DB1s, now long discontinued,
the Quad does a fine job of delivering
music with its character intact, while at
the same time being exceptionally easy
to enjoy. The vitality and exuberance
in the midband will come as the biggest
revelation to those still labouring
under that misapprehension about the
Quad sound, ensuring that voices and
instruments are delivered with excellent
timbre and texture, while at the same time
avoiding any brittleness or hard edges to
the sound.

Of course, how good the Vena sounds will depend on the quality of the original files or sources you play, and while I found the sound via Bluetooth to be a little 'mechanical' and somewhat bleached of detail (a criticism I tend to hold with most Bluetooth implementations, so in no way specific to the Quad), it hits its stride when either a source player is connected to it via analogue, or files are played in from a computer via USB.

With my MacBook Air connected to the Vena, it was readily apparent that higher-resolution versions of favourite recordings were giving more detail and impact to the music, although the sound with CD is more than respectable, making the most of that attractive balance between weight and detail. Provided you don't want to play music at very high levels through low-sensitivity speakers in a huge room, the Vena has more than enough power on offer to deliver realistic listening levels, with current in reserve for the dynamics of recordings.

Best of all, this is a very refined amplifier, both in the way it delivers the timbres of voices and instruments, and in

Or you could try...

The Quad Vena is part of a new generation of miniature stereo amplifiers, all designed for use with computers and other digital sources as well as conventional analogue components



Denon PMA-50

Reviewed last month, the Denon PMA-50 is a close rival to the Quad, offering built-in Bluetooth and file-handling up to DSD5.6xfor £449, all in a package finished to a very high standard. More details at

denon.co.uk



PS Audio Sprout

If you want a truly tiny amplifier the little PS Audio Sprout, selling for £649, has 24-bit/192kHz input capability as well as Bluetooth and analogue inputs, all in a package just over 15cm wide, and yet delivering a 50W per channel output. More information at

signaturesystems.co.uk

that it always sounds entirely in control of what's being played. That's not always the case with these new-generation 'miniamplifiers', some of which can sound, if not exactly breathless, then at least as if they're working pretty hard to deliver the music.

What the Quad engineers have managed to do is combine some of the character on which the company built its reputation with up-to-date features to appeal to a new generation of users – the result is a very impressive package, and one well worth auditioning. **6**

REVIEW FOCAL SPHEAR

In a world of your own

Could these be the perfect earphones for people who don't like earphones?

o say that I'm not the world's biggest fan of in-ear headphones is something of an understatement: I own several pairs, not least because I'm always trying to find a set with which I can get on, and then only for use when I travel long distances and want some degree of isolation from the outside world.

That usually means a diet of my favourite music, not the airline's, when flying somewhere on business, or just as often catching up with a stack of radio programmes or podcasts I've missed because I was listening to something else for work when they were broadcast.

'The result is a pair of earphones as easy to listen to as they are comfortable to wear

Over the years I have suffered all kinds of in-ear headphone problems, from cables tangling and breaking to the batteries in noise-cancelling designs failing, earpieces constantly falling out, and not to mention one little ear-tip coming off and remaining stuck in my ear when the headphones were removed, when I discovered that yes, longhaul flights do carry tweezers!

You see, the abiding problem with these earphones, earbuds or whatever you want to call them is that, in order to get decent bass and exclude external sound, you need to get a good solid seal between the tip and your ear canal, which is why they come with a choice of fittings to suit all sizes of ears. They're held in place by the 'fit' in the ear, which has led to many designs becoming ever smaller and lighter.

The Focal Sphear, just introduced at £100, goes against just about every rule of in-ear headphone design, which may not come as any surprise to anyone familiar with the French company's 'and this is how we do it' design thinking. In fact, it's Focal's first-ever in-ear design, following the success of its Spirit series, and the most obvious thing you notice when you take the earphones out of their neat packaging is that they're physically quite big, the idea being that the main housing yes, it's almost spherical - sits in the outer part of the ear, supporting the weight,

rather than all the work being done by the ear-canals.

By sitting the main body of the earphone on the pinnae, the design means the tips provided - three sets each of memory foam and silicone, to fit different ear-sizes only have to seal the 'phones into the ear, not support them, making what initially look rather large earphones remarkably comfortable once the appropriate tip size has been found.

Another benefit of the larger housing is that drivers of greater diameter can be used: in this case they're 10.8mm Mylardiaphragm/neodymium magnet designs, mounted in an enclosure complete with reflex-porting to tune the bass, with a grille to the rear forming the Focal logo. This ensures not just decent bass, but also increased sensitivity and a relatively easygoing 16ohm impedance.

Completing the specification is a built-in remote control for smartphones, mounted at the point where the cables from the two earpieces meet, and with answer and trackskip controls, along with a microphone also in the cable. Stainless steel is used for major components, and another neat touch is the 45° plug mounting, designed to minimise snagging and potential breakage. Completing the package is a semi-rigid travelling case and a two-pin airline adapter.

PERFORMANCE

Focal is very upfront about the balance of these headphones, explaining that 'It is generally accepted that a loudspeaker has to have a frequency response curve which is as flat as possible. This is not the same for headphones, which emit sound right into the ear canal, bypassing the external parts of the ear and body.' The result is a very slight lift in the bass to give the earphones some more weight in noisy environments, along with the company's usual midband warmth to ensure a rich, generous sound.

The result is a pair of earphones as easy to listen to as they are comfortable to wear – and this is coming from no great fan of such products! In many ways Sphear sounds very like Focal's loudspeakers, and indeed the company's Spirit Pro headphones: it seems to deliver the music with very little effort, even when driven from a portable device, and that warmth is



Type In-ear headphones

Price £100

Drive units 10.8mm electrodynamic, Mylar diaphragms

Impedance 16ohms

Sensitivity 103dB/1mW/1kHz

Weight 15q

Accessories supplied Microphone and remote control for Android/iOS devices (built into cable), three sets each silicon and memory foam ear-tips, airline adapter, carrying case

focal.com

achieved without any impact on the sense of openness and detail.

I spent some time listening via my iPhone, even though I remain unconvinced of that product's virtues as a music player, but enjoyed the Focal sound a lot when the earphones were connected to the excellent Astell & Kern AK Jr player, reviewed in these pages last month. What the Sphear design does so well - apart from being extremely comfortable - is deliver music with warmth and generosity, along with excellent detail, and all without that sense of being shut-in.

In fact, rather more than most in-ear designs, Sphear manages to create a credible sense of soundstage and image focus, whether with large-scale orchestral works such as the Boston Symphony/ Ozawa Scheherazade on DG or the more intimate sound of Julia Fischer's violin and Martin Helmchen's piano on the first volume of their Schubert set, on Pentatone.

Are these earphones for those who don't like earphones? I think so: Focal seems to have solved the comfort problem while delivering a rich, informative and highly persuasive sound. 6

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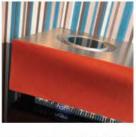
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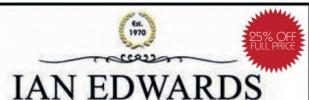


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ESSAY

Stepping up to an unenviable task

Bowers & Wilkins speakers are used in studios worldwide, so replacing its flagship models presented a big challenge

aving been to more hyperbole-packed product launches than most, I freely admit to a certain degree of cynicism when I'm told 'This changes everything': it's a neat enough slogan, but in an industry making pretty mature technology it's unusual for a new product to offer much more than an incremental gain over whatever it replaces. Don't take my word for it: ask Apple, which seems to have left behind its days of 'new sector' products and now makes 'different size, different features' version of what has gone before.

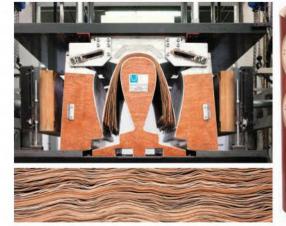
At least Apple has the advantage of being able to play with software and operating systems to differentiate new from old; in the loudspeaker business, the scope for change is somewhat reduced. You have a box, you have some drive units, you have a few more familiar components – and that's it.

Clearly no one quite got that message across at one of the major successes of British hi-fi manufacturing, Bowers & Wilkins; the company has recently launched the latest generation of its 800 Series speakers, used in studios and by music enthusiasts worldwide. And while the looks of the new 800 Series Diamond speakers may be sort of familiar, in that they share some design elements going back to the original 801 of 1979, in fact just about every component has changed,

'It is indicative of the continued strength of the British high-end audio industry globally'

to the extent that only a handful is shared between the most recent version of the 802 model and the new 802 D3. Yes, the Diamond dome of the tweeter is retained, along with the terminals and a few very minor pieces, but beyond that everything is new: midrange and bass drivers, the main cabinet construction, the housings used for the tweeter and mid drivers – in fact, a total of well over 800 components.

I used the term 'construction' advisedly: unlike many speaker companies, Bowers & Wilkins isn't just bolting and gluing together bought-in components down in Worthing. These speakers are built: drive units and crossovers are assembled,





while the cabinets' unique 'reverse wrap' structure is pressed from layers of hand-selected wood 'leaves' in massive moulding machines, creating a single plywood piece encompassing the front baffle and sides. This is then machined, painted or lacquered – the speakers come in gloss black, soft white or rosenut veneer – sanded back and polished by hand before the rest of the components are assembled together to create a finished loudspeaker.

Though it seems churlish to use the term when you see the care involved in the factory, that is merely the final stage in the creation of the new range. Work started seven years ago, and continued through the development and launch of the company's 600 and CM series in recent times – 'three complete new ranges launched in two years' says Senior Product Manager Andy Kerr – but all started back at the company's famous research facility just up the road from the factory in Steyning.

Here, under the leadership of Head of Research Martial Rousseau, the absolute fundamentals of speakers and their components can be investigated using state of the art equipment, then computer modelled, prototyped and tested repeatedly.

It seems that nothing was off-limits in this work: Kerr says 'We even discussed transferring the diamond technology we used for the tweeter domes to the midrange drivers – but then we realised the cost, so that became a very short conversation!'

The most obvious change is that the famous yellow Kevlar midrange cone has gone, replaced by a (surprisingly flexible)

design and material the company calls Continuum, while the Rohacell bass drivers have also vanished, and in their place a new Aerofoil design. Like Rohacell this uses a foam core, here sandwiched between two layers of carbon fibre, but in cross section this new design thickens along the radius from the centre of the cone, before tapering back down to the edge.

The Nautilus tube in which the tweeter sits, itself derived from the shell-like speaker of the same name (which is still in very limited production in Worthing), is also new: a solid aluminium construction now gives greatly enhanced damping and heat-dissipation. Meanwhile, though the 'head' in which the midrange unit is mounted in the higher models may look familiar, it's been completely redesigned, and now made from a massive aluminium piece, complete with integral radial bracing and tuned mass damping, known as Turbine.

That a British-based company can not only do this, but also build the entire range here in Britain, in a factory totally redesigned to handle the new line (and already being further enhanced to meet the demand already generated), is indicative not only of the status of the range on the worldwide market, but also the continued strength of the British high-end audio industry globally. **6**

The Bowers & Wilkins 800 Series Diamond range comprises the standmount 805 D3, at £4500/pr, and three floorstanding models: the 804 D3 (£6750/pr), 803 D3 (£12,500/pr) and 802 D3 (£16,500/pr). The 800 D3 will join the range next spring, at £22,500/pr.



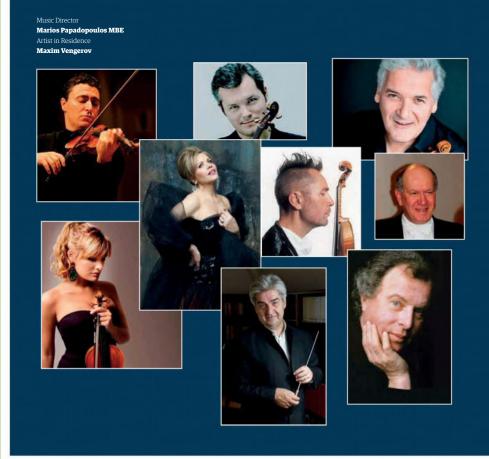
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Is the original the best?

In regard to the new recording of the original 1920 version of Vaughan Williams's A London Symphony reviewed by Andrew Achenbach (October, page 43), although I think that Vaughan Williams was right to subsequently tighten up the action by cutting out repetition, I was reminded that there were lots of good bits in the original version which did not make it into the 1936 version. Ever since first hearing this symphony I have always felt that the fourth movement lacks proper balance prior to the Epilogue. There is an extra piece of cacophony which helps to achieve balance with the opening 'cry of anguish' by tying into it the various themes prior to the Epilogue. It is the hymn tune following the extra piece of cacophony which is out of place. George Butterworth wrote a very good article on A London Symphony and, had he survived the First World War, I expect that he would have been the right person for Vaughan Williams to turn to for advice, particularly as he described the finale as 'the least satisfactory' and that 'there is a feeling that the composer is straining himself to express just a little too much'. Thomas E Rookes, via email

Controversial opera settings

In his survey of Mozart operas on DVD (October, page 12), Mike Ashman makes the point that, for the da Ponte/Mozart trilogy, it's now common for productions to change intentionally the place and the time in which the operas are set. Indeed it is, and has been for many years - nor is it confined to the da Ponte trilogy (as MA's own article illustrates at length), or to the operas of Mozart. In Cardiff, a few miles from where I live, Welsh National Opera has just completed a run of three productions, not one of which is set where and when the composer and librettist specified. Handel's Orlando takes place in a private hospital in London during the Second World War. Bellini's *I puritani* begins in Northern Ireland in the 1970s; it then does switch to England during the Civil War, but this setting is presented as the 1970s Elvira's deranged fantasy. And Stephen Sondheim's Sweeney Todd is moved to the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Letter of the Month

In praise of Kovacevich

I was overjoyed to read Bryce Morrison's outstanding review of Stephen Kovacevich's 'The Complete Philips Recordings' (October, page 85), a pianist who I consider to be grossly underrated; whenever you mention his name in public there are blank stares, whereas Ashkenazy, Barenboim, Brendel, Pollini and others are instantly recognisable.

I have been following his career for over 50 years since I attended a 1962 Prom where he played Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto under Sir Malcolm Sargent and have seen him perform, both as pianist and occasionally as conductor, over 50 times up till 2013. He has rarely disappointed me and I can think of no other living pianist, apart from Barenboim, who has raised musical interpretation to such heights, especially in Beethoven, which he has maintained throughout his musical life.

Mr Morrison is quite right to describe him as one of the piano's



Stephen Kovacevich: underrated?

greats and I totally agree with the statement where he says that 'few more gratifying album reissues have ever come [his] way' ... or mine.

Robin Self
Framlingham

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Please send letters responding to articles in this issue for consideration for publication in the December issue by November 16. *Gramophone* reserves the right to edit all letters for publication.

PRESTÖ

Some opera-goers will no doubt love all this, others will hate it, and many will probably accept it with weary resignation; but few if any will be surprised by it.

Donald Mackinnon

Newport, Gwent

Don't forget Van Cliburn!

I was wondering why Van Cliburn was omitted from the list of pianists in your Hall of Fame (June, page 16). Between winning the first Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow in 1958 during the Cold War and softening cultural barriers, being the first classical pianist to receive a ticker-tape parade in his honour in New York upon his return from Moscow, launching a competition bearing his name in 1962 for young

pianists to enter to further develop their careers, performing for every US President from Truman to Obama, royalty and heads of State around the world, I'm simply flabbergasted he didn't make your list.

Deborah, via email

Suffolk

The Hall of Fame is voted on by our readers, though perhaps your advocacy may encourage readers to consider Van Cliburn when we invite them to choose next year's artists -Ed.

Editorial note

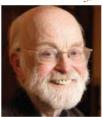
In the Mozart operas on DVD feature by Mike Ashman (October, page 12), the director of *Die Zauberflöte* for Netherlands Opera (released by Opus Arte) was not Gerard McBurney but his brother Simon McBurney.

OBITUARIES

A Gramophone writer, an opera director, a composer for film and TV

DUNCAN DRUCE

Composer, performer and Gramophone contributor Born May 23, 1939 Died October 13, 2015



Duncan Druce, who has written for *Gramophone* since 1997, has died at the age of 78. He was born in Cheshire and studied at King's College, Cambridge

where he took a double first in music. He subsequently read for two Master's degrees: one at the University of Leeds and one at the University of York. After completing his degrees, Druce worked as a producer at BBC Radio 3. He became Senior Lecturer in music at Leeds University's Bretton Hall College, a post he retained until 1991. He lectured on composition at Huddersfield University until his death.

When he stood down from his Leeds University post in 1991, Druce focused on performance and composition and his musical sympathies embraced both early and contemporary music, with much in between. He played in Maxwell Davies's Fires of London, Alexander Goehr's Music Theatre Ensemble, Harrison Birtwistle's Pierrot Players and, later, Christopher Hogwood's Academy of Ancient Music and Sir Roger Norrington's London Classical Players. It was Norrington who conducted, at the 1991 BBC Proms (and later recorded, for EMI) Duncan Druce's edition of Mozart's Requiem ('This is a very fascinating version, done by someone who clearly is a composer himself and at the same time very sensitive to Mozart,' wrote the Mozart scholar Stanley Sadie in his Gramophone review in November 1992).

Duncan Druce also recreated the finale for a new performing edition of Thomas Arne's *Artaxerxes*, which was premiered by the Classical Opera Company under Ian Page at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, in 2009 and subsequently recorded for Linn (4/11, the first complete recording of the work).

A generous and perceptive critic, Duncan Druce's reviews centred on music of the Baroque as well as recordings of string music. He was a joy to work with and will be much missed by everyone at *Gramophone*.

NIKOLAUS LEHNOFF

Opera director Born May 20, 1939 Died August 22, 2015



Nikolaus Lehnhoff, who has died at the age of 76, worked as an assistant to Wieland Wagner at Bayreuth in the 1960s and Richard Wagner's operas ran through his

career like a thread, including *Tristan und Isolde* at Orange with Jon Vickers and Birgit Nilsson (1973), a *Ring* cycle in Munich (1987), *Parsifal* (ENO, 1999) and *Tristan und Isolde* (Glyndebourne, 2003, revived in 2007 and 2009 and now also on DVD). In the UK he is best known for his work with ENO and Glyndebourne (which also included a trio of Janáček operas).

Many of his productions are enshrined on DVD including Puccini's Fanciulla del West (Amsterdam, 2009), Richard Strauss's Elektra (Salzburg, 2010) and Salome (Baden-Baden, 2011), Tannhäuser (Baden-Baden, 2008), Lobengrin (Baden-Baden, 2006), Poulenc's Dialogues des Carmélites (Hamburg, 2008) and Debussy's Pelléas et Mélisande (Essen, 2012).

ALEXANDER FARIS

Composer, arranger and conductor Born June 11, 1921 Died September 28, 2015



Born in Northern Ireland, educated at Oxford University, the Royal College of Music and the Juilliard School, Faris became a major figure in film, TV

and 'lighter' music in the UK. He was instrumental in reviving the operettas of Offenbach with the Sadler's Wells Company in the 1960s and played a leading role in the Gilbert & Sullivan renaissance later in the decade. A thoroughly professional musician, he conducted a vast repertoire from musicals to opera. He composed the music for film and television series including The Duchess of Duke Street (1976), Fanny by Gaslight (1981) and, his best-known score, Upstairs Downstairs (1971) which secured him an Ivor Novello Award. He also wrote a highly regarded biography of Offenbach (Faber & Faber: 1980).

NEXT MONTH DECEMBER 2015



Christmas in Leipzig

What might Christmas Day have sounded like in Bach's time?
David Vickers asks the Dunedin Consort (pictured), who have just recorded a vespers reconstruction including the Magnificat

Critics' Choice

Our expert panel of reviewers name the recordings of 2015 that they'd most like to give for Christmas

Humperdinck's Hansel and Gretel

The operatic take on the Grimm brothers' fairy tale has strong links to the Christmas season – so what better time for Andrew Mellor to name his favourite versions?

GRAMOPHONE

ON SALE DECEMBER 9

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Beethoven Pf Sons Opp 53 & 106. Kim. F ACC303551	Chédeville. Vivaldi Cote Rec Sons from 'Il pastor fido'.	CHANNEL CLASSICS channelclassics.com
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Various Cpsrs Coeur: Airs de cour français de la fin du	Serei. Zombola Hungarian Contemporary Vespers. Schola	
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Codax Ondas: Cantigas de amigo. Biffi/Hamon. F A390	Korngold Cpte Songs. Pieczonka/Jarnot/Mees. ® ② C5252	Accademia Daniel/Ad-El. © CPO777 646-2
ARCO DIVA arcodiva.cz/en/	Rachmaninov Wks for Vc & Pf. Krijgh/Amara.	Various Cpsrs Intermezzi del Verismo. Graz PO/Zocche.
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Mendelssohn. Suk. Verdi Stg Qts. Kapralová Qt. © UPO166	CARUS carus-verlag.com	DABRINGHAUS UND GRIMM mdg.de
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Beethoven Cpte Wks for Pf Trio, Vol 2. Swiss Pf Trio. © AUDITE97 693	CEDILLE cedillerecords.org	Reger Org Wks. Schoener. Torroba Gtr Wks. Bungarten. © MDG949 1919-6 © MDG905 1915-6
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124 GRAMOPHONE NOVEMBER 2015 gramophone.co.uk

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	Sibelius Scaramouche. Turku PO/Segerstam.
	Vivaldi Sacred Wks, Vol 4. Aradia Ens/Mallon.
	Wagner Rheingold (pp2015). Sols incl Goerne & DeYoung/Ho
	Kong PO/Zweden. © ② 8 660374/5; € ≤ NBDOC
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Bach, CPE Syms for Stgs (r1979). English Concert/Pinnock.	Beethoven Orch Wks. <i>Walter.</i>	DVD & BLU-KAT
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Bach, JS Vc Stes. Haimovitz. © 2 PTC5186 555	Harnoncourt. © 88875 13645-2	ACCENTUS
Schubert Lieder. Elsner/Berlin RSO/Janowski.	Haydn. Mozart Stg Qts. <i>Tokyo Qt.</i> § ⑤ ② 88875 12458-2	Pärt Lost Paradise - A Documentary. Atteln/Wilson, R.
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Tilson Thomas. © PTC5186 225	Mozart Op Arias. Röschmann/Swedish CO/Harding.	Monteverdi Vespro della Beata Vergine (1610). Sols/
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Haydn Schöpfung. Sols/Collegium Vocale, Ghent/	Poulenc Cpte Pf Wks. <i>Crossley.</i>	BEL AIR CLASSIQUES
Champs-Elysées Orch/Herreweghe. © 2 LPH018	Schubert Orch Wks. <i>Davis. C.</i> S @ 3 88875 12706-2	Reich Rain. Music for 18 Musicians (pp2014). Paris Op Ballet/
Schubert Syms Nos 1, 3 & 4. Royal Flemish PO/Herreweghe. © 2 LPH019	Sibelius Orch Wks. <i>Ormandy</i> .	Ens Ictus/Synergy Vocs/Octors.
	Stravinsky Orch Wks. <i>Stravinsky</i> .	F № BAC126; F ♠ BAC426
PHILHARMONIA philharmonia-records.com	Williams Great Movie Soundtracks. Various artists.	Tchaikovsky Nutcracker. Berlin St Ballet/Orch of Deutsche Op,
Rachmaninov Cpte Pf Concs. Paganini Vars (pp2013-15). De la Salle/Philh Zurich/Luisi. M ③ PHR0104	© ⊕ 88875 12732-2	Berlin/Reimer. (Ē) № BAC125; (Ē) 😂 BAC425
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Morricone Time to Die. OST. © BSXCD8836	© ® 88875 03223-2	⑤ № BAC119; ⑥ ≥ BAC419
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Schubert Pf Trios. Guarneri Trio Prague. © PRD250 310	Various Cpsrs Cpte Sony Recs. Hahn. (S) (5) Q 88875 12618-2	Petersen, A/Staatskapelle Berlin/Barenboim.
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Michael, T Musicalische Seelenlust. Ens Polyharmonique/	Various Cpsrs Winter's Delight. Quadriga Consort.	Lausanne/Tokyo Ballet/Israel PO/Mehta.
Schneider. © RK3403	€ 88875 07572-2	Ē 🙅 206 0878; Ē 😂 206 0874
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Britten Ceremony of Carols. Children's Crusade. Hanover Girls' Ch/Schröfel. F ROP6100	VASARI SINGERS vasarisingers.org	® ⑥ 22 OA1198BD; ♠ ⑤ \$\square OABD7189BD
Franck Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross. Mainz Cath Ch	Rathbone Under the Shadow of his Wing. Vasari Sgrs/	Hérold Fille mal gardée (pp2015). Royal Ballet/Orch of the
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Various artists. SHEVA COLLECTION Shevacollection.th Britten. Seabourne Viola dolorosa. Hamann/Komiya. Seabourne Steps, Vol 5. Viale. © SH137	Mozart Requiem. Sols/Vienna Singverein/BPO/Karajan. ⑤ ② ⑥ ③ VPC85254 Orff Carmina Burana (r1960). Philadelphia Orch/Ormandy. ⑥ ② ⑥ ⑤ VPC85251	TACET
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Various artists. SHEVA COLLECTION Britten. Seabourne Viola dolorosa. Hamann/Komiya. Seabourne Steps, Vol 5. Viale. SIGNUM Brahms. Bruckner Motets. Tenebrae/Short. © SIGCD430	Mozart Requiem. Sols/Vienna Singverein/BPO/Karajan. ⑤ ② ⑥ VPC85254 Orff Carmina Burana (r1960). Philadelphia Orch/Ormandy. ⑥ ② ⑥ VPC85251 Pärt Tabula Rasa (r1995). Congress Orch. ⑥ ② ⑥ VPC80121 Rachmaninov Pf Conc No 2. Richter/Warsaw PO/Wislocki.	TACET
Various artists. © SDL436 SHEVA COLLECTION Britten. Seabourne Viola dolorosa. Hamann/Komiya. © SH137 Seabourne Steps, Vol 5. Viale. © SH39 SIGNUM Signumecords.com Brahms. Bruckner Motets. Tenebrae/Short. Various Cpsrs Time and its Passing - Chor Wks. Rodolfus/	Mozart Requiem. Sols/Vienna Singverein/BPO/Karajan. © ② ⑤ VPC85254 Orff Carmina Burana (r1960). Philadelphia Orch/Ormandy. © ② ⑥ VPC85251 Pärt Tabula Rasa (r1995). Congress Orch. © ② ⑥ VPC80121 Rachmaninov Pf Conc No 2. Richter/Warsaw PO/Wislocki. © ⑥ VPC85007	TACET
Various artists. © SDL436 SHEVA COLLECTION Britten. Seabourne Viola dolorosa. Hamann/Komiya. © SH137 Seabourne Steps, Vol 5. Viale. © SH39 SIGNUM Signumecords.com Brahms. Bruckner Motets. Tenebrae/Short. Various Cpsrs Time and its Passing - Chor Wks. Rodolfus/ Allwood. © SIGCD445	Mozart Requiem. Sols/Vienna Singverein/BPO/Karajan. © ② ③ VPC85254 Orff Carmina Burana (r1960). Philadelphia Orch/Ormandy. © ② ① VPC85251 Pärt Tabula Rasa (r1995). Congress Orch. © ② ① VPC80121 Rachmaninov Pf Conc No 2. Richter/Warsaw PO/Wislocki. © ① VPC85007 Satie Pf Wks. Gorišek.	TACET
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Various artists. © SDL436 SHEVA COLLECTION Britten. Seabourne Viola dolorosa. Hamann/Komiya. © SH137 Seabourne Steps, Vol 5. Viale. © SH36 SIGNUM Signumrecords.com Brahms. Bruckner Motets. Tenebrae/Short. Various Cpsrs Time and its Passing - Chor Wks. Rodolfus/ Allwood. © SIGCD445 SIMAX Simax.no Beethoven Pf Conc No 5. Chor Fantasy. Berezovsky/	Mozart Requiem. Sols/Vienna Singverein/BPO/Karajan. © ② ⑤ ③ VPC85254 Orff Carmina Burana (r1960). Philadelphia Orch/Ormandy. © ② ⑥ ① VPC85251 Pärt Tabula Rasa (r1995). Congress Orch. © ② ⑥ ① VPC80121 Rachmaninov Pf Conc No 2. Richter/Warsaw PO/Wislocki. © ⑥ ① VPC85007 Satie Pf Wks. Gorišek. © ② ⑥ VPC85252 Strauss, R Also sprach Zarathustra (r1959). VPO/Karajan.	TACET
Various artists. © SDL436 SHEVA COLLECTION Shevaccollection.it Britten. Seabourne Viola dolorosa. Hamann/Komiya. © SH137 Seabourne Steps, Vol 5. Viale. © SH36 SIGNUM Signumrecords.com Brahms. Bruckner Motets. Tenebrae/Short. Various Cpsrs Time and its Passing - Chor Wks. Rodolfus/ Allwood. © SIGCD445 SIMAX Simax.no Beethoven Pf Conc No 5. Chor Fantasy. Berezovsky/ Swedish CO/Dausgaard. © PSC1285	Mozart Requiem. Sols/Vienna Singverein/BPO/Karajan. ② ② ③ VPC85254 Orff Carmina Burana (r1960). Philadelphia Orch/Ormandy. ⑤ ② ⑤ ① VPC85251 Pärt Tabula Rasa (r1995). Congress Orch. ⑥ ② ⑥ ① VPC80121 Rachmaninov Pf Conc No 2. Richter/Warsaw PO/Wislocki. ⑥ ⑥ ① VPC85007 Satie Pf Wks. Gorišek. ⑤ ② ⑥ ② VPC85252 Strauss, R Also sprach Zarathustra (r1959). VPO/Karajan. ⑥ ⑥ ① VPC85005 Stravinsky Firebird. Columbia SO/Stravinsky.	COLINIDO
Various artists. SHEVA COLLECTION Britten. Seabourne Viola dolorosa. Hamann/Komiya. Seabourne Steps, Vol 5. Viale. SIGNUM Brahms. Bruckner Motets. Tenebrae/Short. Various Cpsrs Time and its Passing - Chor Wks. Rodolfus/Allwood. SIMAX Breathows I SIGCD445 SIMAX Breathows I SIGCD45 SHEATHOR SHORT	Mozart Requiem. Sols/Vienna Singverein/BPO/Karajan. © ② ③ VPC85254 Orff Carmina Burana (r1960). Philadelphia Orch/Ormandy. © ② ① ① VPC85251 Pärt Tabula Rasa (r1995). Congress Orch. © ② ① ② VPC80121 Rachmaninov Pf Conc No 2. Richter/Warsaw PO/Wislocki. © ② ① VPC85007 Satie Pf Wks. Gorišek. © ② ① VPC85252 Strauss, R Also sprach Zarathustra (r1959). VPO/Karajan. © ① VPC85005 Stravinsky Firebird. Columbia SO/Stravinsky. © ① VPC85014	SOUNDS
Various artists. © SDL436 SHEVA COLLECTION Britten. Seabourne Viola dolorosa. Hamann/Komiya. © SH137 Seabourne Steps, Vol 5. Viale. © SH35 SIGNUM Signumrecords.com Brahms. Bruckner Motets. Tenebrae/Short. Various Cpsrs Time and its Passing - Chor Wks. Rodolfus/Allwood. © SIGCD445 SIMAX Simax Simaxno Beethoven Pf Conc No 5. Chor Fantasy. Berezovsky/ Swedish CO/Dausgaard. © PSC1285 SOLI DEO GLORIA monteverdi.couk/sdg Bach, JS Mass in B minor. Sols/Monteverdi Ch/English Baroque	Mozart Requiem. Sols/Vienna Singverein/BPO/Karajan. © ② ⑤ VPC85254 Orff Carmina Burana (r1960). Philadelphia Orch/Ormandy. © ② ⑥ VPC85251 Pärt Tabula Rasa (r1995). Congress Orch. © ② ⑥ VPC80121 Rachmaninov Pf Conc No 2. Richter/Warsaw PO/Wislocki. © ⑥ VPC85007 Satie Pf Wks. Gorišek. © ② ⑥ VPC85252 Strauss, R Also sprach Zarathustra (r1959). VPO/Karajan. © ⑥ VPC85005 Stravinsky Firebird. Columbia SO/Stravinsky. © ⑥ VPC85014 Tchaikovsky Pf Conc No 1 (r1958). Cliburn/RCA SO/Kondrashin.	SOUNDS
Various artists. © SDL436 SHEVA COLLECTION Shevaccollection.it Britten. Seabourne Viola dolorosa. Hamann/Komiya. © SH137 Seabourne Steps, Vol 5. Viale. © SH336 SIGNUM Signumrecords.com Brahms. Bruckner Motets. Tenebrae/Short. © SIGCD430 Various Cpsrs Time and its Passing - Chor Wks. Rodolfus/ Allwood. © SIGCD445 SIMAX Simax. Seethoven Pf Conc No 5. Chor Fantasy. Berezovsky/ Swedish CO/Dausgaard. © PSC1285 SOLI DEO GLORIA monteverdi.couk/sdg Bach, JS Mass in B minor. Sols/Monteverdi Ch/English Baroque Sols/Gardiner. © SDG722	Mozart Requiem. Sols/Vienna Singverein/BPO/Karajan. © ② ⑤ VPC85254 Orff Carmina Burana (r1960). Philadelphia Orch/Ormandy. © ② ⑥ VPC85251 Pärt Tabula Rasa (r1995). Congress Orch. © ② ⑥ VPC80121 Rachmaninov Pf Conc No 2. Richter/Warsaw PO/Wislocki. © ⑥ VPC85007 Satie Pf Wks. Gorišek. © ② ⑥ VPC85252 Strauss, R Also sprach Zarathustra (r1959). VPO/Karajan. © ⑥ VPC85005 Stravinsky Firebird. Columbia SO/Stravinsky. © ⑥ VPC85014 Tchaikovsky Pf Conc No 1 (r1958). Cliburn/RCA SO/Kondrashin.	
Various artists. © SDL436 SHEVA COLLECTION Shevaccollection.it Britten. Seabourne Viola dolorosa. Hamann/Komiya. © SH137 Seabourne Steps, Vol 5. Viale. © SH36 SIGNUM Signumrecordscom Brahms. Bruckner Motets. Tenebrae/Short. © SIGCD430 Various Cpsrs Time and its Passing - Chor Wks. Rodolfus/ Allwood. © SIGCD445 SIMAX Simax.no Beethoven Pf Conc No 5. Chor Fantasy. Berezovsky/ Swedish CO/Dausgaard. monteverdiccuk/sdg Bach, JS Mass in B minor. Sols/Monteverdi Ch/English Baroque Sols/Gardiner. © SDG722 SOLSTICE	Mozart Requiem. Sols/Vienna Singverein/BPO/Karajan. © ② ⑤ ③ VPC85254 Orff Carmina Burana (r1960). Philadelphia Orch/Ormandy. © ② ⑥ ① VPC85251 Pärt Tabula Rasa (r1995). Congress Orch. © ② ⑥ ③ VPC80121 Rachmaninov Pf Conc No 2. Richter/Warsaw PO/Wislocki. © ⑥ ① VPC85007 Satie Pf Wks. Gorišek. © ② ⑥ VPC85252 Strauss, R Also sprach Zarathustra (r1959). VPO/Karajan. © ⑥ ① VPC85005 Stravinsky Firebird. Columbia SO/Stravinsky. © ⑥ ① VPC85014 Tchaikovsky Pf Conc No 1 (r1958). Cliburn/RCA SO/Kondrashin. © ⑥ ① VPC85001 Vivaldi Four Seasons. Musici/Ayo.	SOUNDS that open the heart and mind
Various artists. © SDL436 SHEVA COLLECTION Britten. Seabourne Viola dolorosa. Hamann/Komiya. © SH137 Seabourne Steps, Vol 5. Viale. © SH36 SIGNUM Signumrecordscom Brahms. Bruckner Motets. Tenebrae/Short. © SIGCD430 Various Cpsrs Time and its Passing - Chor Wks. Rodolfus/ Allwood. © SIGCD445 SIMAX Simax.no Beethoven Pf Conc No 5. Chor Fantasy. Berezovsky/ Swedish Co/Dausgaard. © PSC1285 SOLI DEO GLORIA Bach, JS Mass in B minor. Sols/Monteverdi Ch/English Baroque Sols/Gardiner. © © SDG722 SOLSTICE Solstice-music.com Mulet Org Wks. Monin.	Mozart Requiem. Sols/Vienna Singverein/BPO/Karajan. © ② ⑤ VPC85254 Orff Carmina Burana (r1960). Philadelphia Orch/Ormandy. © ② ⑥ VPC85251 Pärt Tabula Rasa (r1995). Congress Orch. © ② ⑥ VPC80121 Rachmaninov Pf Conc No 2. Richter/Warsaw PO/Wislocki. © ⑥ VPC85007 Satie Pf Wks. Gorišek. © ② ⑥ VPC85252 Strauss, R Also sprach Zarathustra (r1959). VPO/Karajan. © ⑥ VPC85005 Stravinsky Firebird. Columbia SO/Stravinsky. © ⑥ VPC850014 Tchaikovsky Pf Conc No 1 (r1958). Cliburn/RCA SO/Kondrashin. © ⑥ VPC85001 Vivaldi Four Seasons. Musici/Ayo. © ⑥ VPC85010 Various Cpsrs Incomparable. Callas.	
Various artists. © SDL436 SHEVA COLLECTION Shevaccollection.it Britten. Seabourne Viola dolorosa. Hamann/Komiya. © SH137 Seabourne Steps, Vol 5. Viale. © SH36 SIGNUM Signumrecords.com Brahms. Bruckner Motets. Tenebrae/Short. © SIGCD430 Various Cpsrs Time and its Passing - Chor Wks. Rodolfus/ Allwood. © SIGCD445 SIMAX Simax.no Beethoven Pf Conc No 5. Chor Fantasy. Berezovsky/ Swedish CO/Dausgaard. © PSC1285 SOLIDEO GLORIA monteverdic Cuk/sdg Bach, JS Mass in B minor. Sols/Monteverdi Ch/English Barroque Sols/Gardiner. © SDG722 SOLSTICE	Mozart Requiem. Sols/Vienna Singverein/BPO/Karajan. © ② ⑤ ③ VPC85254 Orff Carmina Burana (r1960). Philadelphia Orch/Ormandy. © ② ⑥ ① VPC85251 Pärt Tabula Rasa (r1995). Congress Orch. © ② ⑥ ③ VPC80121 Rachmaninov Pf Conc No 2. Richter/Warsaw PO/Wislocki. © ⑥ ① VPC85007 Satie Pf Wks. Gorišek. © ② ⑥ VPC85252 Strauss, R Also sprach Zarathustra (r1959). VPO/Karajan. © ⑥ ① VPC85005 Stravinsky Firebird. Columbia SO/Stravinsky. © ⑥ ① VPC85014 Tchaikovsky Pf Conc No 1 (r1958). Cliburn/RCA SO/Kondrashin. © ⑥ ① VPC85001 Vivaldi Four Seasons. Musici/Ayo.	

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Urgent call for help to save the eastern lowland gorilla issued by Fauna & Flora International. Your response by 14 December could make a huge difference.



Without action now the eastern lowland gorilla could be gone forever – cut the coupon or go to www.savegorillas.org.uk to help protect the remaining gorillas.

Consumed by conflict and caught in the grip of a severe conservation crisis, the eastern lowland gorilla – the world's largest gorilla – is fighting for survival.

Fauna & Flora International (FFI) has put out an urgent call to the global community to save the remaining 10,000 or so eastern lowland gorillas.

Funds are sought immediately to help protect new community nature reserves that are essential to the survival of the remaining gorillas between the Maiko and Kahuzi-Biega National Parks in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It is a crucial step towards protecting these elusive and Endangered apes from complete extinction.

The eastern lowland gorilla faces multiple threats to its survival - all of them due to human activity. A major expansion of agriculture and pastures in the DRC in recent years has put enormous strain on the gorilla's shrinking habitat. Industry, too, has taken its toll, with natural habitats squeezed by extensive mining for gold and coltan - a mineral used in making mobile phones. Hunting and the continuing consumption of illegal 'bush meat' have also caused many apes to be killed. What's more, continuous conflict has made it incredibly challenging to enforce wildlife protection.

As a result, numbers of eastern lowland gorillas have plummeted. Just 15 years ago there were around 17,000 eastern lowland gorillas in the wild. Today, scientists believe that at most 10,000 may still remain alive. Experts don't know for sure exactly how many there are, but scientists are carrying out population surveys to find out exactly how low the gorilla population has dropped. The critical conflict problems in the DRC mean the population has gone almost completely unmonitored since 1996. Now, with your help, FFI want to change that

FFI wants to protect existing gorilla families in a vulnerable – currently unprotected – area between the Maiko and Kahuzi-Biega National Parks. These families are vital to saving the remaining

eastern lowland gorillas from extinction.

This gorilla protection has only become possible in recent years. Since the elections in the DRC in 2006, and the increased stability that came with them, conservation teams are starting to consolidate a series of community reserves to ensure the gorillas are fully protected.



"The Maiko and Kahuzi-Biega National Parks in the DRC are home to some of the most endangered species in Africa, including the eastern lowland gorilla. However, as human populations in the region expand so too does the risk from habitat loss. A participatory form of conservation is giving these communities a means to exist and is helping the eastern lowland gorilla and other wildlife. The quickly back this vital work that is crucial to the survival of the eastern lowland gorilla."

Sir David Attenborough OM FRS, Fauna & Flora International vice-president

For the species to remain genetically viable, it is crucial that the gorilla families can interbreed and are not separated by deforestation and agriculture expansion in an unprotected area. FFI knows community managed land is a sustainable way to achieve this.

To do all this FFI needs to raise £130,489.56 to protect $10,847.67 \text{ km}^2$ of forest, where the gorillas are at risk. The £130,489.56 must be raised as soon as possible so that the team at FFI have time to plan ahead. Meanwhile unprotected gorillas are dying from the threats they face every day.

The eastern lowland gorilla is on the very edge of survival. Together we can save it. Please send your gift by 14 December - at the very latest.

One of the world's rarest apes faces extinction

Population plummets from 17,000 to less than 10,000

Fauna & Flora International (FFI) have launched an emergency appeal to raise £130,489.56 that will enable them to push ahead with the protection of new Community Reserves in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This is crucial to the battle to save the Endangered eastern lowland gorilla from extinction. You can contribute by cutting the coupon below, visiting www.savegorillas.org.uk or calling 01223 431991.

How you can help save the eastern lowland gorilla

£130,489.56 is sought from readers to urgently protect a series of community nature reserves that will safeguard the gorillas in unprotected areas - where they are at risk of losing their habitat and being killed by hunters. These are a few of the items urgently needed:

- £40.10 could pay for rations for a gorilla survey team
- £129.36 could pay for fuel to run the team's off-road vehicle for a month
- £258.72 could pay for a GPS unit and batteries, to help the teams locate gorilla families in the dense rainforest
- £679.15 could pay for a satellite phone, to help the teams report and respond to emergencies
- £19,180 is also needed to fund the entire DRC conservation team for 6 months.

Any donations, large or small, will be received with thanks.

Cut the coupon below and return it with your gift to FFI, to help save the remaining 10,000 Endangered eastern lowland gorillas. Alternatively, go to www.savegorillas.org.uk or call 01223 431991. Thank you.

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REVIEWS INDEX

A	11 32	Pieces – selection 65	G	Songs to the Moon
Alwyn, W	Intermezzos: Op 116 – No 2; No 4;	Cruft	Gade, J	Statuesque – Henry Moore: Reclin
Naiades 58	Op 119 – No 1 59	These Hours 85		Figure in Elmwood; Pablo Pica
В	Liebeslieder Waltzes, Op 52a 70	D	Tango jalousie 59 Gershwin	Head of a Woman; Winged Viv We're Through
ach, JS	Piano Quartet No 1, Op 25 (orch Schoenberg) 31	Darke, H	Prelude No 1 59	White in the Moon
hromatic Fantasia and Fugue,	Symphony No 4 32			Winter Roses – Looking West: Sw
BWV903 70	Violin Concerto 95		Gesualdo	Light
igues – various 62	Wiegenlied, Op 49 No 4 59	Dean	Moro lasso 83	Herbert
oldberg Variations, BWV988 62	Britten	Carlo 83	O crux benedicta 83	Ghazel
ass, BWV232 – Et incarnatus est' 85	Hymn to Saint Cecilia 85	Debussy	Gibbons	Yesterthoughts
elude and Fugue, 'St Anne',	Bruckner	Beau soir 59	What is our life? 85	Punchinello
BWV552 (orch Schoenberg) 31	Aequali – No 1; No 2	Syrinx 58	Giordano	Hindemith
eludes – various 62	Motets – various 75	Suite bergamasque – Clair de lune 70	Fedora – Act 2, Intermezzo 45	Kleine Kammermusik, Op 24 No 2
cular Cantatas, Vol 5: Birthday		Delius	Gombert	Symphonies – Mathis der Maler; in
Cantatas – various 2 74	, , ,	Romance 57		flat
olin Concertos – BWV1041;	Brumel	Dohnányi		Hindson
BWV1042; BWV1052R;	Que est ista 82	String Quartet No 3, Op 33 50		
BWV1055R; BWV1056R 28	Sicut lilium inter spinas 82	Dutilleux	Book of Throws 34	Pulse Magnet
Solo Cello Suites 62	Büsser, H	Sonatine 58	Layers of Earth 34	Holst
occata and Fugue in F, BWV540 71	Les cygnes 58	Dvořák	Three Places 34	The Planets
rber	Byrd	Cello Concerto, Op 104 B191 34	Grieg	St Paul's Suite (organ version)
mmer Music, Op 31 57	Diligies Dominum 85	Piano Trio No 4, 'Dumky', Op 90	The Wounded Heart, Op 34 No 1 59	Howells
mmer Music, Op 31	_	B166 34		Even such is time
	С	Serenade, Op 22 B52 45	Guiney	Take him, earth, for cherishing
nata for Two Pianos and Percussion 50	Casella	String Quartets – No 12, 'American';	Cello Sonata 47	
	Elegia eroica, Op 29	No 13 50	Since I believe in God the Father	J
ring Quartet No 2, Op 17 Sz67 50	Symphony No 1, Op 5		Almighty 85	Jackson, G
X	Symphonic Fragments from 'Le	E	н	To Morning
olin Sonata No 2	couvent sur l'eau', Op 19 32			Janáček
ethoven	Cavalli	East	Halsey, E	Mládí
mont, Op 84 – Overture 26	Artemisia – Affliggetemi, guai dolenti;	When David heard 85	Toccata in C minor 71	On an Overgrown Path, Book 1
lelio – Overture, Op 72c 26	Dammi morte 88	Elgar	Handel	Piano Sonata '1.X.1905, From the
nno Sonata No 14, 'Moonlight' 70	La Calisto – extracts 88	Five Pomp and Circumstance Marches,	Agrippina 89	Street'
erture, 'Coriolan', Op 62	Didone – Alle ruine del mio regno;	Op 39 34	Alcina – Tornami a vegheggiar 89	Jóhansson, MB
verture, 'König Stephan', Op 117 26	L'alma fiacca svani 88	Polonia, Op 76	Almira – Geloso tormento 89	Solitude
mphonies – complete 28	Eliogabalo – Sinfonia 88	Sea Pictures, Op 37		
mphony No 2	Giasone – Sinfonia 88		*	Josquin
mphony No 5	Il primo libro di canzone – La suave	F	Giulio Cesare – Da tempeste; Piangerò	Liber generationis
llini	melodia 88	Fauré	89	Praeter rerum seriem
Capuleti e I Montecchi 88	L'Ormindo – Prologue; Che citta	Après un rêve, Op 7 No 1 59	Orlando – Amor è qual vento 89	Stabat mater dolorosa
erlioz	88	Ballade, Op 19	Partenope – Qual farfalleta 89	K
	Libro quarto d'intavolatura di	Papillon, Op 77	Rinaldo – Dunque i lacciAh crudel	
	chitarrone – Toccata prima 88	1	89	Kelly, F
mphonie fantastique, Op 14 31	Chopin	Ferneyhough	Serse – Un cenno leggiadretto 89	Violin Sonata 'Gallipoli'
ber	Ballade No 4, Op 52 70	Epigrams 65	Townsish and (II master Edg.) Aim	Kodály
ttalia 🥞 74	Barcarolle, Op 60 63	Invention 65	Ballo: Chaconne: Entrée (Jalousie)	Esti dal (Evening Song
mn to Apollo	Berceuse, Op 57	Lemma-Icon-Epigram 65	89	Korngold
issa Salisburgensis 🥯 74	Cello Sonata, Op 65 32,50	Opus Contra Naturam 65	Teseo - Amarti si vorrei 89	Piano Trio, Op 1
orning Heroes 9 74	Introduction and Polonaise brillante,	Quirl 65		Suite, Op 23
udite tympana 👺 74	Op 3 32,50	Sonata for Two Pianos 65	1	Kreisler
nata Sancti Polycarpi 🥞 74	Mazurkas – No 32, Op 50 No 3; No	Three Pieces 65	1	La gitana
olcom	41, Op 63 No 3	Févin	heaven 85	
aceful Ghost Rag 70	Nocturnes – No 5, Op 15 No 2; No 8,	Tempus meum est ut revertar 82	Haydn	L
nd, FH	Op 27 No 2 70	Finzi	String Quartet, Op 54 No 2 57	Lassus
orus in E flat 71	Piano Concerto No 1 32	Haste on, my joys! 85	Symphonies – No 102; No 103,	Angelus ad pastores ait
ahms		Fitelberg, J	'Drumroll'; No 104, 'London'	Ave Maria
e Maria, Op 12 75	Preludes – Op 28; Op 45; Op posth 63	_	⊕ 37	Dixit Dominus
llade, Op 118 No 3 59	Variations brillantes, Op 12 63	Nachtmusik, 'Fisches Nachtgesang', Op 9 51		Magnificat superaurora lucis rutila
, , ,	Cilea	1	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	
n deutsches Requiem, Op 45	Adriana Lecouvreur – Act 2,			"Quem vidistis
· M · · · · O · 110	Intermezzo 45	Sonatine 51	Heggie, J	pastores"
rei Motetten, Op 110 75				X77.1 II
rei Motetten, Op 110 75 est- und Gedenksprüche, Op 109 75 eistliches Lied, Op 30 75	Compère Paranymphus salutat virginem 82	String Quartets – Nos 1 & 2 51 Freidlin, J	The Breaking Waves – Advent; Darkness; Music 78	Videntes stellam Leoncavallo

128 GRAMOPHONE NOVEMBER 2015 gramophone.co.uk

.ey	Piano Sonata No 13, K333 70	Rameau	Shostakovich	Tchaikovsky
A Prayer of King Henry V 85	Popoli di TessagliaIo non chiedo,	Anacréon 91		Symphonies – No 2 'Little Russian
iadov	eterni Dei, K316	Les indes galantes 91	Sibelius	No 3, 'Polish'
The Enchanted Lake, Op 62 9 39	Schon lacht der holde Frühling, K580	Zaïs 91		Violin Concerto
iebermann, L	81	Ramsey		94 Telemann
onata for flute and piano 58	Solfeggio, K393 No 2	· ·	' '	Fantasia, TWV40:22
igeti	Symphony No 41, 'Jupiter', K551 31	When David heard 85	Humoresques – Op 87; Op 89	43 Violin Sonatas, TWV41 – A1; d5;
ix Bagatelles 59	Vorrei spiegarvi, o Dio, K418	Ravel	Karelia Overture	e8; G1; g1; G10
tring Quartet No 1, 'Métamorphoses	N	À la manière de Alexander Borodine	Karelia Suite	94 Tippett
nocturnes' 57	Noble	67	Lemminkaïnen Legends	Dance, clarion air
loyd, G	Complete Organ Works, Vol 1 71	À la manière de Emmanuel Chabrier	A Lonely Ski Trail	Tomkins
n memoriam 47	Nunes Garcia		Night Ride and Sunrise	When David heard
И	Missa pastoril para a noite de natal 82	Boléro 50	Pelléas et Mélisande (extracts)	Trotignon
lacMillan		Gaspard de la nuit 67	` '	Piano Concerto, Different Spaces
he Gallant Weaver 85	0	Jeux d'eau 67		110is 1 icccs
agnard	Offenbach	Pavane pour une infante défunte 67	, ,	1
ano Trio, Op 18 53	Les contes d'Hoffmann – Intermède;	Piano Concertos 40		94 Tüür
iolin Sonata, Op 13 53	Barcarolle S 38	Sonatine 67	String Quartet 'Voces intimae', Op 5	
lahler	Overtures 38	La valse 70		94 Psalmody
rmphony No 4 9 37	P	Recknell	Suite, Op 117	43 V
Iartinů	_	Ozymandias 85	Swanwhite - complete incidental mu	venables, l
ute Sonata 58	Paganini	Reubke	4	43 Miniatures – various
artland	Caprice No 24 (arr for flute) 58	Adagio 67	Symphonies – Nos 1-7	94 Victoria
nerican Invention 38	Pantcheff, R	Piano Sonata 67	Tapiola	94 Requiem – Lux aeterna
eat the Retreat 38	Sonata for Violin and Organ 47	Sonata on the 94th Psalm 67	1 .	43 Villa-Lobos
rossing the Border 38	Parry	Riedl	The Lizard – complete incidental	Song of the Black Swan
rernal Delight 38	Music, when soft voices die 85			43
r Anderson's Pavane 38	Pärt	Fanfara		43 W
atrol 38	Credo 38	Roussel	1	Wagner
noulder to Shoulder 38	Darf ich 38	Joueurs de flûte 58	1 1	Das Rheingold
	Festina lente 38	Rowarth	Violin Concerto	94 Weelkes
ascagni	Fratres 38	The Evening Watch 85	Was it a dream?, Op 37 No 4	59 When David heard
'amico Fritz – Intermezzo 45	La Sindone 36	Rubbra	Silva Gomes	When David heard Widor
avalleria rusticana – Intermezzo 45	Mein Weg 36	Eternitie 85	Missa a 8 vozes e instrumentos	22
e maschere – Sinfonia 45 leinardus	Nunc dimittis 85	There is a spirit 85	Sollima	Suite for flute and piano, Op 34 Wolf-Ferrari
	Passacaglia 36	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		
uther in Worms 78	Summa 36	S		Il gioielli della Madonna – Intermezzo II
lendelssohn	which was the son of	Saint-Saëns	Somervell	
omplete Songs Without Words 67	Pearsall	Carnaval des animaux – Le cygne 59	Two Conversations about Bach	47 Y
astorella 67	Lay a garland 85	Piano Concertos – No 2; No 5,	Stradella	Ysaÿe
lesquita, L de	Piazzolla	'Egyptian' 40	San Giovanni Cristostomo	81 Solo Violin Sonata, Op 27 No 5
re Maria 82	Histoire du Tango 58	Schmitt	Strauss, R	
loria 82	Pinto		Till Eulenspiegel	95 Collections
adre nosso 82	Beata virgo 82	Antoine et Cléopâtre – Two Suites,	Stravinsky	Alamire –
essiaen	Lição de solfejo No 25	Op 69 40		(A D. I
uatuor pour la fin du temps –	Oh! Pulchra es 82	J'entends dans le lointain 40	Le Sacre du printemps (revised 1947	D 1 D1:11 : (TT 1
Louange à l'éternité de Jésus 59	Pott, F	Le palais hanté, Op 49	,	Katherine Bryan – 'Silver Bow'
ilhaud	Einzige Tage 47	Schubert	Souza, C de	Dudok Quartet - Métamorphoses
onatine 58	Viola Sonata 47	Fantasia, D940 70	Ascendit Deus	Ensemble Correspondances –
ontemezzi	Poulenc	Quartettsatz, D703 54	Suk	'Le Concert Royal de la Nuit'
amore di tre re – Act 3, Preludio 45	Flute Sonata 58	String Quartet No 15, D887 54	Meditation on the Old Czech Chora	
outon	Prokofiev	Trockne Blumen' Variations 58	'St Wenceslaus', Op 35a	'Brazilian Adventures'
illo tempore 82	Flute Sonata 58	Schulhoff	Serenade, Op 6	43 Mariana Flores –
ota pulchra es 82	Puccini	Fünf Stücke 50	Sumsion, H	'Heroines of
ozart	Manon Lescaut	Flute Sonata 58		the Venetian Baroque'
n, vous dirai-je maman, K265 79	Manon Lescaut – Act 3, Intermezzo 45		v iomi Jonata	London Winds –
candro, lo confessoNon so d'onde	Preludio sinfonico 45	Schumann	T	'Music for Winds'
viene, K294 79		Vanitas vanitatum, Op 102 No 1 59	Taktakishvili, O	Yo-Yo Ma; Kathryn Stott –
nns un bois solitaire, K308 79		Scott, C		'Songs from the Arc of Life'
e Zauberflöte – Der Hölle Rache;		Cello Sonata No 2		Metamorphosen Berlin –
Marsch der Priester 81	Le villi – La Tregenda 45	Scriabin	Tallis	'Inspiration'
re pastore 91	R	Piano Sonatas – No 4, Op 30; No 5,	Miserere nostri. Thou wast, O God,	
anonisches Adagio, K410 79		Op 53 65	and thou wast blest	85 'Twelfth Night Recital'
es petits riens, K299b – Overture 81	Rachmaninov	Poème, Op 32 No 1 65	Tavener	Anne-Kathrin Peitz;
	Cello Sonata, Op 19 50		O, do not move	Youlian Tabakov –
	0			
Iass No 17, K427 – Et incarnatus est 79	Suites – Nos 1 & 2 54			'Satiesfictions'
fass No 17, K427 – Et incarnatus est 79 fusik für einer Faschingspantomime, K446 – Adagio 79	Suites – Nos 1 & 2 54 Symphonic Dances, Op 45 54 Symphony No 2 53 54	Vers la flamme, Op 72 65 Sermisy	Taverner	'Satiesfictions' Rodolfus Choir – 'Time and its Passing'



The Danish-born, London-residing choreographer on immersing himself in scores, finding the human scale in masterpieces and seeking out voice-loving composers

I grew up on Miles Davis. My parents listened to modern jazz, and they took me to jazz concerts. Everything changed when I studied film, which I'd always been interested in. I started to watch European arthouse movies when I was 15 and at that time they often used Baroque soundtracks. That was my way into classical music.

I remember encountering Pasolini's film *The Gospel According to St Matthew* – it used the Bach *St Matthew Passion*, and that slowly started to transform what I listened to at home. I found myself seeking out Bach – I got through the *St Matthew* and *St John* Passions – and then I started going to the Danish Opera. Wagner hit me hard: I saw a production of *The Flying Dutchman* and then *The Ring*.

I listen to a lot of music, and there will always be pieces where I think, 'I'd love to choreograph this'. That's what happened with Jeux. I'd first used it 10 or so years ago at the Bregenz Festival when we did an opera based on Debussy's unfinished The Fall of the House of Usher. It had been reconstructed but it only lasted 45 minutes so we also used Jeux and Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faune. I'd always thought I'd love the chance to return to Jeux, so when Peter Martins at New York City Ballet asked me, I said, 'This is the time'.

I'm using 14 dancers. There's not a narrative as such but you have the play of young people in the park, the sexual deception...It's written in the score that a ball bounces on to the stage at the beginning, so I've kept that in. The musicality of the dancers is phenomenal. It's a complicated piece – it has 60 different time signatures! It was clear to me that at the beginning of the process I needed to sit down with the conductor, Daniel Capps, and go through the score to decide on tempi and pauses, and to make sure we were on the same page. He also worked with the pianist, which always helps.

My preparation for choreographing a piece is absolutely learning the piece inside out. I suppose it's like how an actor would learn the text – I have to be able to sing it in my head. If you have to think, 'How long is that phrase? What's coming next?', you're not free. It has to be total immersion, so that when I start choreographing the music is in my body.

I think there are probably pieces that don't work. Big symphonic works like the Beethoven symphonies are really difficult to choreograph – the sound world can be so big that it dwarfs the human scale. I was watching NYCB doing *Swan Lake* and there are moments of such total intimacy, like a close-up in a film – the second-act *pas de deux* with solo violin for example. You have to be able to find that human scale within the surrounding musical world.



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My Goldberg project was back in 2009 but even now, when I listen to the piece, I find new things.

I probably wouldn't have considered Schoenberg's *Transfigured Night (Verklärte Nacht)* because it's such a monumental piece but when Mark Baldwin at Rambert asked me to do it, I jumped at it. It's based on a poem about a woman who walks with her lover in the forest and confesses she's pregnant with another man. Her lover says, 'I forgive you; I will take this child as my own'. My version falls into two halves. The first is very fraught and intense, and the second half is about the emotional truth of what's possible – it's neither total forgiveness nor a total disaster, but a sort of bruised acceptance.

My collaboration with Danish poet Søren Ulrik Thomsen for the Royal Danish Ballet in May next year is very different to Schoenberg and Debussy! Hans Abrahamsen's music is very hard to explain – he's been informed by minimalism and Stockhausen, but there's always a sense of phrase and voice, you can always find the human inside the music. I'm using his Double Concerto and a beautiful piece called *Schnee* – 'Snow' – which, although rhythmic, still has a sense of breath, of song.

I have this weakness for Mahler songs – again, it's that fusion of the symphonic and the human. I choreographed his *Songs of a Wayfarer* a long time ago, but I'd love to do *Das Lied von der Erde*. And I've always loved Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*...I work a lot in opera, so I've always found the combination of voice and instruments extremely compelling. **G**Catch Transfigured Night across the UK until February 19

(rambert.org.uk); Jeux returns to NYCB in February (nycballet. com). For more on Brandstrup, visit kimbrandstrup.org

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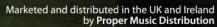
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